

॥ Śrī Śrī Gaura Gadādharaṁ Vijayetaṁ ॥

***THE MEANS TO ATTAIN BHAGAVĀN  
AS PER ŚRĪMAD-BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ,  
ŚRĪ-GURU-AṢṬAKA AND ADVERTENT AVOIDANCE OF  
SEVĀ-APARĀDHA & NĀMA-APARĀDHA***



॥ gopālanandanam kṛṣṇam vande jagad-gurum ॥

**ŚRĪ HARIDĀS SHĀSTRĪ**

|| Śrī Śrī Gaura Gadādharaṁ Vijayetaṁ ||

*sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopāla-nandanah |  
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīr bhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtaṁ mahat ||*

All the Upaniṣads are *Go*, Gopālanandana (dear one of the *gopālas* i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa) is the milker, Pārtha (Arjuna) is the calf and those with fine intelligence are enjoyers of this great nectar called Gītā.

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ADVERTENT AVOIDANCE OF SEVĀ-APARĀDHA AND NĀMA-APARĀDHA**



|| *gopālanandanam kṛṣṇam vande jagad-gurum* ||

I pay obeisances to Kṛṣṇa Gopālanandana, the *Guru* of the universe

Translated from original Hindi book titled

*śrīmad-bhagavad-gītoka bhagavat-prāpti ka upāya  
tathā śrī guru-aṣṭaka, sevā-aparādha aur nāma-aparādha kā yatnapūrvak varjan*

Compiled and written by  
the resident of Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma

**Śrī Haridās Shāstri**

*nyāya-vaiśeṣika śāstrī, nyāya-ācārya, kāvya-vyākaraṇa-sāṅkhya-  
mīmāṃsā-vedānta-tarka-tarka-nyāya-vaiṣṇavadarśana tīrtha,  
vidyā-ratna*

Published by:

Śrī Haridās Shāstri

Founder and President Śrī Haridās Shāstri Go Seva Sansthan

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Date of publication:

*Tirobhāva tithi* of Śrīla Vinod Bihāri Gosvāmi *Vedānta ratna*

30<sup>th</sup> Dec 2012

First English edition

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Printer:

Sri Gadadhara-Gaurahari Press,

“Sri Haridās Niwās”

Old Kaliadaha,

Vrindavan 281121

Dist: Mathura (U.P.)

India

## Sanskrit Pronunciation Guide

### Vowels

<i>a</i>	<u>son</u> , <u>luck</u>	<i>e</i>	<u>set</u> , <u>beg</u> (but longer)
<i>ā</i>	<u>far</u> , <u>car</u>	<i>ai</i>	<u>night</u> , <u>aisle</u>
<i>i</i>	<u>sit</u> , <u>dig</u>	<i>o</i>	<u>border</u> , <u>saw</u>
<i>ī</i>	pol <u>ice</u> , <u>week</u>	<i>au</i>	<u>now</u> , <u>how</u>
<i>u</i>	p <u>ush</u> , <u>full</u>	<i>ṁ</i>	nasal <u>m</u>
<i>ū</i>	<u>rule</u> , <u>boom</u>	<i>ḥ</i>	a final <u>h</u> -sound
<i>ṛ</i>	<u>river</u>	<i>-aḥ</i>	(at the end) <u>aha</u>
<i>ṝ</i>	<u>rethink</u>	<i>-iḥ</i>	(at the end) <u>iha</u>

### Consonants

<i>k</i>	<u>kilo</u> , <u>come</u>	<i>d</i>	<u>down</u> , <u>day</u> (tongue against teeth)
<i>kh</i>	ma <u>ke</u> <u>hay</u>	<i>dh</i>	good <u>hood</u> (tongue against teeth)
<i>g</i>	forget, <u>go</u>	<i>n</i>	<u>nut</u> , <u>north</u> (tongue between teeth)
<i>gh</i>	big <u>heat</u>	<i>p</i>	stop, <u>typist</u>
<i>ṅ</i>	<u>sing</u> , <u>hang</u>	<i>ph</i>	<u>uphill</u>
<i>c</i>	<u>charity</u> , <u>much</u>	<i>b</i>	<u>book</u> , <u>boat</u>
<i>ch</i>	staunch <u>heart</u>	<i>bh</i>	rub <u>hard</u>
<i>j</i>	<u>jug</u> , enjoy	<i>m</i>	<u>map</u> , <u>famous</u>
<i>jh</i>	<u>judge</u> Harry	<i>y</i>	<u>yellow</u> , <u>year</u>
<i>ñ</i>	can <u>y</u> on, <u>new</u>	<i>r</i>	<u>red</u> , <u>right</u>
<i>ṭ</i>	<u>take</u> , <u>toe</u>	<i>l</i>	<u>love</u> , <u>look</u>
<i>ṭh</i>	ligh <u>t</u> house	<i>v</i>	<u>voice</u> , <u>very</u>
<i>ḍ</i>	<u>down</u> , <u>day</u>	<i>ś</i>	German word <u>spre</u> chen
<i>ḍh</i>	god <u>hood</u>	<i>ṣ</i>	<u>show</u>
<i>ṇ</i>	say r and then na	<i>s</i>	<u>service</u> , <u>soft</u>
<i>t</i>	<u>take</u> , <u>toe</u> (tongue against teeth)	<i>h</i>	<u>help</u> , <u>hero</u>
<i>th</i>	ligh <u>t</u> house (tongue against teeth)		

॥ gopālanandanam kṛṣṇam vande jagad-gurum ॥

॥ Śrī Śrī Gaura Gadādharaṁ Vijayetām ॥

## **TRANSLATORS' NOTE**

This work contains the English translation of the book “*Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītoka Bhagavat Prāpti Kā Upāya Tathā Śrī-Guru-aṣṭaka, Sevā-aparādha Aur Nāma-aparādha*” originally written in Hindi by Śrī Haridās Śāstri affectionately called as Maharājaji by students, disciples and well-wishers.

During our study of the work from Sri Maharaj ji, he explained various concepts in detail. When we sought his permission to translate this book into English along with his elucidations and explanations for the benefit of the English readers, he gave his kind consent. In addition to guiding us closely in the proper translation of the work and in the presentation of the elucidations, he directed us to write a detailed introduction and an epilogue, which he thoroughly examined and edited. The Hindi book does not have them. Those portions of the main text that are written in the square brackets are the explanations that appear only in the English book. The matter contained in the parentheses, however, are present in the original Hindi text. A few words such as *Bhagavān*, *devatā*, *bhakti* and so on have been retained as in the original text. Readers interested in the subject matter are requested to kindly contact at the details provided in the beginning of the book. Readers are also requested to bring to the notice of translators any errors that they may find in the book. Such errors due to inadvertency are attributable solely to the translators and not the author.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa  
Śrī Brajabhūshan dāsa  
Śrī Jagannāth dāsa

## INTRODUCTION

*iha hi sukha-duḥkha-prāpti-parihārayorloka-pravṛttirdṛśyate*

From beginningless time, the *jīva* has been hankering for happiness and for removing distress. He has thus been wandering endlessly in various species of life. But the *jīva*, tormented by ignorance and without acquiring the appropriate means for removing misery and obtaining happiness, has been facing only suffering in this world. He is like an animal wandering in a desert, thirsty for water and going after a mirage. His life is also filled with meaninglessness. The first and primary cause for this experience of suffering is *bhagavad-bahirmukhatā* or aversion to *Bhagavān*. In other words, the fault of *bhagavad-bahirmukhatā* is the only reason for all the distress and meaninglessness. The cause for removing distress and obtaining supreme bliss is *bhagavad-unmukhatā* (or turning towards *Bhagavān*).

It is said in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

*bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād  
īśādapetasya viparyayo'smṛtiḥ |  
tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet taṁ  
bhaktyaikayeṣaṁ guru-devatātmā* ॥ [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.37]

“The person who is averse to *Bhagavān* forgets his *svarūpa* (essential nature of the self) due to *Bhagavān*'s *māyā* and develops attachment to a second object, the material body. Due to this affection, he keeps developing various types of fear (birth, death, old age, disease etc.). Therefore, an intelligent person, knowing his *Guru* as his worshipable *Bhagavān* and the dearest, must worship *Bhagavān* through *ananya-bhakti* to *Guru*.”

*ācāryaṁ māṁ vijānīyānnāvamanyeta karhicit |  
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ* || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.27]

“Know that the *Guru* is Me. Do not disrespect him even a little. Do not be envious of him (attributing defects to his personality, instructions and qualities) by seeing him with *martya-buddhi* (mortal intelligence, considering him like a mortal being), for the *Guru* is the *īṣṭa*. (*īṣṭa* means the object that one seeks to attain. Every devotee seeks his dear Lord or *devatā* as the final goal. His *Guru* is that *devatā* or Lord.)”

*Bhagavān* has various kinds of inconceivable abilities. These abilities, also known as *śaktis*, are innumerable and multi-fold. Of these, His *svarūpā-śakti* (His inherent ability) also known as *antarāṅgā-śakti* is three-fold viz., *hlādinī*, *saṁvīt* and *sandhinī*. These *śaktis* are not mutually mixed. Each of them is complete and independent. *Bhakti* is the essence of



*hlādinī* and of *saṁvīt* (they are not mixed but occur together). (*hlādinī-sāra-samaveta-saṁvīt-sārarūpā bhaktiḥ*)

Being the inherent ability of *Bhagavān*, *bhakti* is as powerful as *Bhagavān* and just a semblance (*ābhāsa*) of *bhakti* could bring an end to all sins. However, it is also as causeless as *Bhagavān* and is independent like Him.

*satām prasāṅgānmama vīrya-saṁvido  
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ |  
taj-joṣaṇād-āśvapavarga-vartmani  
śraddhā ratir-bhaktiranukramiṣyati* || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.25]

“Due to proper, distinguished association with *sādhus*, narrations that reveal My splendour and beauty and give bliss to the ears and the heart take place and because of hearing such narrations with attachment, *śraddhā*, *ratī* and *bhakti* to Me occur very quickly and sequentially, this being the path which leads to the cessation of ignorance.”

A person can get this *bhakti* only by the grace of *Bhagavān* or his *bhakta*. A concise definition of *bhakti* is given by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī as follows:

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam |  
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam bhaktiruttamā* || [Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11]

“*Uttamā-bhakti* is the nature of favourably serving Kṛṣṇa and everything related to Kṛṣṇa both in one’s thoughts, words and deeds and in one’s feelings, at all times and in all states of consciousness. This nature is without any unfavourableness, is devoid of the tendency of getting any desire other than that of serving Kṛṣṇa and everything related to Kṛṣṇa. It is also not covered by knowledge that has liberation as its goal or work that is performed with the expectation of material results or to avoid them.”

The term “*uttamā-bhakti*” is also called by various names such as *ananyā-bhakti*, *akiñcanā-bhakti*, *nirguṇā-bhakti*, *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti*, *suddhā-bhakti*, *kevalā-bhakti*, *mukhyā-bhakti* and so on.

Since, *bhakti* entails favourable conduct with full awareness while simultaneously avoiding any kind of unfavourableness and when all activities in *bhakti* are done for the purpose of pleasing the subject of such activities viz., *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, any action that causes displeasure to Him is known as *aparādha*. These are mainly of two kinds, viz. *nāma-aparādha* (related to Lord’s name) and *sevā-aparādha* (related to Lord’s service). These *aparādhas* have been explained towards the end of this book. One must consciously give up these *aparādhas*. The tendency to not be careful enough in giving them up or the tendency to think that some kind of atonement could be done if some *aparādhas* are committed is an indication of duplicity or *kaṭatā*.

Of all these *aparādhas*, the most common is *guror-avajñā* – disrespecting one’s *Guru* by considering him to be a mortal being and attributing flaws to his personality and qualities. This *aparādha* makes one’s conduct directly opposite to the instruction given in the verse

quoted first viz., “an intelligent person, knowing his *Guru* as his worshipable *Bhagavān* and the dearest must worship *Bhagavān* through *ananyā-bhakti* to *Guru*”. Hence, how much ever one shows devotion to *Bhagavān*, if he does not have *ananyā-bhakti* towards his *Guru* knowing his *Guru* as his worshipable *Bhagavān* and the dearest as per the statement quoted above, *Bhagavān* considers him to be an *aparādhi* (offender) only.

With such a duplicitous behaviour, one is sure to always remain trapped by *Bhagavān*’s *bahiraṅgā-śakti* (external ability) that comprises of the three material modes viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

*yeṣāṁ sa eva bhagavān dayayedanantaḥ  
sarvātmanā”śṛita-pado yadī nirvyalīkam |  
te dustarāṁ atitaranti ca deva-māyām  
naiṣāṁ mamāhamiti dhīḥ śva-śṛgāla-bhakṣye* ॥ [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.7.42]

“*Bhagavān* on His own showers His unlimited mercy on one who surrenders himself and everything that belongs to him at His lotus feet. As a result of this mercy, they know the nature of His *bahiraṅgā-śakti* (*deva-māyā*) that is very difficult to overcome and cross over it provided, their surrender is without duplicity. Only such people do not have feelings such as ‘this is me’ and ‘this is mine’ towards themselves and their children whose bodies will be eaten by dogs and jackals.”

*Śrī Guru-aṣṭakam* has been given as a part of the book so that one always remembers that *Śrī Guru* is *Bhagavān* Himself and conducts Himself without duplicity in such a way that he consciously avoids such a grave *aparādha* as mentioned above by being always surrendered at His lotus feet. There is no other way to please *Bhagavān Śrī Hari*.

*sṛṣṭvā purāṇi vividhāny-ajayātma-śaktyā  
vrkṣān sarīrpa-paśūn khaga-darśa-matsyān |  
tais tair atusṭā-hṛdayaḥ puruṣaṁ vidhāya  
brahmāvaloka-dhiṣaṇaṁ mudam āpa devaḥ* ॥ [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.9.28]

“After creating the various bodies of living creatures such as trees, reptiles, animals, birds, snakes, fishes and so on through His inconceivable inherent *śakti*, *Bhagavān* was not happy. Then He created the human species and became pleased. This is because, human beings have the intelligence to look towards *Bhagavān* and gain His direct realisation.”

This entire creation is produced by *Bhagavān*, maintained by Him and they have their shelter in Him after destruction. Humans have the ability to know, understand and follow the instructions of *Bhagavān* which results in universal well-being that naturally includes well-being of one’s own self. The perfection of human life is in manifesting this ability. The set of principles on which this ability is practised and perfected is known as *dharma*.

*dhāraṇāt dharmam-ityāhuḥ dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ |  
yaḥ syāt dhāraṇa-samyuktaḥ sa dharma itī niścayaḥ* ॥ [Mahābhārata 12.109.11]



“*Dharma* is derived from the idea of nurturing all. It is by *dharma* that the subjects are maintained. That which is equipped with the nature of protecting and nurturing is indeed *dharma*.”

Wise ones have described *dharma* in various ways down the ages for the welfare of the human race. These descriptions are often at variance with each other. This is because *dharma* has been explained to different individuals in accordance with their natures and their eligibilities. Also, it has been explained differently in accordance with the needs of the times and places with the intention of maintaining decorum.

Thus, while *dharma* talks about simple rules, sub-rules and austerities and regulations at times, at other times it talks about complex ones. Sometimes, it talks about principles to be followed over a short period of time, and sometimes about principles to be followed over prolonged periods. The maze of *dharma* therefore appears to be complex and multifarious.

While *dharma* has been explained thus by various sages, thinkers etc, *dharma* in its original form that can bring fearlessness and real satisfaction to everyone is only known to *Bhagavān*, the original creator and universal well-wisher.

*dharmaṁ tu sāksād bhagavat-praṇītaṁ  
na vai vidur ṛṣayo nāpi devāḥ |  
na siddha-mukhyā asurā manuṣyāḥ  
kutaś ca vidyādhara-cāraṇādayaḥ ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.19]

“*Dharma* is that which is given directly by *Bhagavān*. Such *dharma* is not known to the sages, the *devas*, the chief of the *siddhas*, the *asuras*, the humans, what to speak of the *vidyādharas* or the *cāraṇas*.”

The *dharma* that is directly given by *Bhagavān* is called as *bhāgavata-dharma*.

*ye vai bhagavatā proktā upāyā hy ātma-labdhave |  
aṅgaḥ puṁsām aviduṣām viddhi bhāgavatān hi tān ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.34]

“That *dharma* which is spoken by *Bhagavān* Himself is the only means for obtaining *Bhagavān*. Know that *dharma* which is easy to perform by all humans, including those who are not intelligent, to be ‘*Bhāgavata-dharma*’.”

Since the highest *dharma* viz. *Bhāgavata-dharma* is given by *Bhagavān*, it must be known as to Who is referred to by the term *Bhagavān*. *Bhagavān* is one who has ‘*Bhaga*’ intrinsically.

*aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śrīyaḥ |  
jñāna-vairāgyayoś caiva saṁnām bhaga itīṅganā ||* [Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.5.74]

The six qualities comprising of the ability to control everything, inconceivable efficacy (like in jewels and *mantras*), fame (due to completely auspicious qualities of speech, mind and body), all round perfection, omniscience, and renunciation (detachment from all material objects and material affairs) all in their fullness are called *bhaga*.

The above qualities can be contained into two terms – *aiśvarya* (magnificence) and *mādhurya* (sweetness in relationship).

Many personalities and many forms of God are called as *Bhagavān* by virtue of their manifesting various levels of *aiśvarya* and/or *mādhurya*. However, it is the verdict of Śrī Vyāsadeva that only in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and more specifically, the form He manifests in Vraja, are complete *aiśvarya* (magnificence) and complete *mādhurya* (sweetness) seen. This is because He manifests complete *aiśvarya* in a human form that also manifests complete *mādhurya*.

*yan martya-līlāpayikaṁ sva-yoga-  
māyā-balaṁ darśayatā grhītam |  
vismāpanaṁ svasya ca saubhagarddheḥ  
paraṁ padam bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇāṅgam* || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.2.12]

“That form which the Lord manifested by the strength of His *yoga-māya* (His own *cit-śakti*) for the purpose of His pastimes in the mortal world was so attractive that because of that form He Himself (situated in *Vaikuṇṭha* as Śrī Nārāyaṇa) was getting bewildered. It was the pinnacle of the perfection of good fortune. His limbs had such beauty that they were the ornaments of the ornaments themselves.”

*gopy ādade tvayi kṛtāgasi dāma tāvad  
yā te dasāśru-kalilāñjana-sambhramākṣam |  
vaktraṁ nīṇya bhaya-bhāvanayā sthitasya  
sā māṁ vimohayati bhīr api yad bibhēti* || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.31]

“When mother Yaśodā was once driven to take a rope to tie You up because of Your breaking a curd-pot, then tears started gushing from Your eyes and the mascara in Your eyes, washed by those tears was smeared on Your cheeks, Your eyes were becoming fickle and because of feeling afraid, You faced downwards – I am bewildered by that condition of yours! What a condition for one Whom fear fears!”

Therefore Śrī Vyāsadeva gave this definitive verse in the beginning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

*ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ  
kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam |  
indrāri-vyākulaṁ lokaṁ  
mṛdayanti yuge yuge* || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.28]

“All these incarnations are the *aṁśavatāra* or the *kalāvatāra* of *Bhagavān*, but Kṛṣṇa is *svayam Bhagavān* (*Bhagavān* Himself in His complete manifestation). When people are perturbed by the over-activity of the demoniac, then all these incarnations protect those tormented people and make them happy.”

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ saccidānanda-vigrahaḥ |  
anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam* || [Brahma Samhita 1]

“Kṛṣṇa is the supreme Lord and He is *saccidānanda-vigraha*, in other words, His inherent form is that of eternal knowledge and bliss. He is without a beginning Himself, therefore, He is beginningless to all the principles of existence. He is the origin of everything and there is no principle prior to Him. Another name of His is Śrī Govinda and He is the original cause of all the causes in this infinite universe.”

Hence, the *dharma* given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in works such as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Śrīmad-Bhagavad Gita gets significance as the supreme and original *dharma*.

It is clear from the descriptions of a *bhakta*’s character in 12th chapter of Srimad-Bhagavad-gītā that a *bhakta* has the nature of being favourable to Kṛṣṇa Himself and to everything related to Him. This makes him dear to *Bhagavān*.

In order to make it very clear that it is *uttamā-bhakti* and *uttamā-bhakti* alone that pleases *Bhagavān* completely and takes one to *Bhagavān*, He answers unequivocally to Arjuna’s question in the beginning of 12th chapter as to who are the best worshippers – Those one-pointed *bhaktas* (*bhaktas* with no motive other than performing *bhakti*), having firm faith in *Bhagavān* always or others who only worship *Brahman* that is *avyakta* (imperceptible) and *akṣara* (imperishable)?

He replies:

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*mayy āveśya mano ye mām nitya-yuktā upāsate |*  
*śraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ ||12.2||*

Śrī Bhagavān said –

“Those who are always engaged in My *upāsana* (worshipful service) with *śraddhā* devoid of the three *guṇas*, keeping their mind engrossed in Me, are the best knowers of *yoga*. Such is My opinion.”

He says further:

*kleśo’dhikataras teṣām avyaktāsakta-cetasām |*  
*avyaktā hi gatir duḥkhaṁ dehavadbhir avāpyate ||12.5||*

“He whose mind is fully engrossed in formless *Brahman* faces extreme suffering, for the way of the formless is attained with misery by those who identify themselves with their body.”

From the above verse, if one were to think that being engrossed on the formless *Brahman* is difficult only for those who identify themselves with their body and not for those who do not identify themselves with their body, the mention by *Bhagavān* in Bhagavad-Gītā verse 14.5 is worthy to take note of:

*sattvaṁ rajas tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛti-sambhavāḥ |*  
*nibadhnanti mahā-bāho dehe dehinam avyayam ||*

“O Arjuna! The three *guṇas* that are born of My *prakṛti* viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* tie the indestructible *jīva* in the material body.”

The only means to get rid of the attachment or identification to the material body is to go beyond the three *guṇas* and the only means for that viz., *bhakti* that is free from guile, is explained by *Bhagavān* in verses 14.26 and 14.27. Thus, it is not possible for a person who is embodied to not identify himself with his body.

*Bhagavān* also makes it clear that only those who are intent on the well-being of all living beings seeing *Bhagavān* present in every one of them and every one of them present in *Bhagavān*, having the same *anukūlatva* (favourable tendency) towards *Bhagavān* and all those beings as they have towards themselves, while having all their senses under control, can attain Him.

This also settles both duality and non-duality in one’s perception of this creation. While absolute oneness is not possible due to the living entity’s intrinsic nature of being *Aṇu* (minute) and *Bhagavān*’s intrinsic nature of being *Vibhu* (all-pervading), *Bhagavān* gives the *dharma* where there is oneness in heart with Him and also with everything else in His creation while always maintaining difference in existence.

Here, it becomes important to define the term “*yoga*”. In the *yoga-sūtras* of sage Patañjali “*yoga*” is defined as “*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*” or restraint of the tendencies of the mind. Its meaning is “*samīyama*” or self-control. This is a particular meaning of the word. However, the essential meaning of this word is “intentness”. In *Bhagavad-gītā* also, the term “*yoga*” means doing something with a focussed mind or intentness. It is derived from the verbal root “*yuj-samādhau*”. In the entire *Bhagavad-gītā*, this term is used very widely such as in *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* etc. In fact, every chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* has been named with the term “*yoga*” such as “*Arjuna-viśāda-yoga*”, “*sāṁkhya-yoga*”, “*karma-yoga*” and so on, ending with “*sannyāsa-yoga*”.

The use of the term “*yoga*” in *Bhagavad-gītā* has nothing to do with *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* comprising of physical and mental exercises. The broad usage of the term in *Bhagavad-gītā* also does not affect its meaning of “intentness” for, any action which when not done with intentness is not done well. Hence, *Bhagavān* explains “*yoga*” as “*karmasu-kausālam*”- skilfulness in whatever action one does.

*etāvān eva loke’smin puṁsām dharmah paraḥ smṛtaḥ |*  
*bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.22]

“*Bhakti-yoga* done towards *Bhagavān* through processes such as *nāma-saṅkīrtana* (glorification of His name) is alone said to be the supreme *dharma* for the humans.”

*eṣa me sarvadharmāṇām dharmo 'dhikatamo mataḥ |*  
*yad bhaktyā puṇḍarīkākṣam stavair arcen naraḥ sadā ||* [Mahābhārata 13.135.8]



“This, in my opinion, is the most sublime of all *dharma*s, viz., one should always worship lotus-eyed Śrī Kṛṣṇa with *bhakti* through glorifying Him.”

*nāma-saṅkīrtanam yasya sarva-pāpa-praṇāśanam |*  
*praṇāmo duḥkha-samanas tam namāmi hariṁ param ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.13.23]

“I bow down before the Supreme Lord Hari whose *nāma-saṅkīrtana* destroys all the sins completely and obeisances to Whom extinguishes all misery.”

In the present age of *Kali*, the glorification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is praised as the panacea for all ills.

*kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ |*  
*kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅgaḥ param vrajet ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.51]

“O King! Even though the age of *Kali* is full of all vices, it still has a great quality. Only because of the influence of the glorifications of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, humans get freed from bondage and attain the supreme destination.”

*kalau kṛta-yugaṁ tasya kalis tasya kṛte yuge |*  
*yasya cetasi govindo hṛdaye yasya nācyutaḥ ||* [Viṣṇu-dharma]

For one in whose heart Govinda is present, *kali-yuga* is actually *satya-yuga* and for one in whose heart there is no remembrance of Govinda, Whose another name is Acyuta, even *satya-yuga* is *kali-yuga*.

The simplest way to glorify Śrī Kṛṣṇa is to pronounce His name. This is so because the name of *Bhagavān* is non-different from *Bhagavān* Himself.

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya rasa vigrahaḥ |*  
*pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma nāminoḥ ||* [Padma Purāṇa]

“Kṛṣṇa’s name is a *cintāmaṇi* (a thought-gem that can fulfill all of one’s desires), is Kṛṣṇa’s essential form, is fully cognizant, is an embodiment of *bhakti-rasa*, is complete, free from blemishes, never touched by the three modes of this world because of there being no difference between the name and the named. (In other words, the same truth is manifest in two forms.)”

However, since the name is *Bhagavān* Himself, It is causeless and hence cannot be attained by or through anything in this world.

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ |*  
*sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ ||* [Padma Purāṇa]

“Just like the *svarūpa* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, His name and other characteristics also cannot be captured by one’s senses. Only when one becomes favourable to serve Him will It manifest Itself through one’s senses such as the tongue.”



In order to present humanity with a proper demonstration of *uttamā-bhakti* towards Himself, *Svayam Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in this age of *Kali*.

*kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam |*  
*yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.32]

“Those with fine intelligence worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, but Whose bodily colour is yellow, and Who is accompanied by His close associates such as Śrī Nityānanda and Śrī Advaita and their associates such as Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, with weapons such as the names of God, and other servants and followers such as Śrī Gadādhara and Śrī Govinda. Learned and wise persons worship Him with the *yajña* known as *saṅkīrtana*.”

In His Śikṣāṣṭaka (Teachings in eight verses) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu mentions that there are absolutely no rigid rules in order to utter the names of *Bhagavān*. However, in the very next verse he has succinctly mentioned the necessary qualification to glorify the names of *Bhagavān*.

*tṛṇād api sunīcena taruriva sahiṣṇunā |*  
*amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ ||*

“Considering oneself lower than a blade of grass (in other words free from conceit) and being tolerant like a tree (being intent on only other’s welfare while not depending on others in maintaining oneself), not expecting any respect and always giving respect to others, one must always glorify Lord Hari through His names.”

The above verse indicates that one must be without *abhimāna* (pride). *Abhimāna* also means self-conception. The only self-conception one must have is that he is a servant of Lord Hari and must not have even a tinge of *abhimāna* based on relations, place, time, origins, gender etc. This is referred to by *Bhagavān* in verse 18.66 of Bhagavad-gītā. To have only the *abhimāna* of being the servant of Lord Hari means, becoming His and having a tendency of *ekatva* (oneness) and *anukūlatva* (favourableness) towards Lord Hari and everything related to Him. The indeclinable “*api*” has been used in the verse to indicate that, while the grass, though being lowly might still try to raise its blades to seek sun-light (indicating a desire for selfish happiness), the *bhakta* must be even lower than that grass, never giving up his *abhimāna* of *daso’ham* (I am a servant of Lord Hari and of those that are Lord Hari’s) and never letting an *abhimāna* connected with his origins, creed, gender etc., ever arise.

The ideal of a tree has been given using the indeclinable “*iva*” to indicate that one must be tolerant, self-dependent while only intent on *paropakāra* (benefitting others). The tree does not ask for water even if it is drying up or protest when being cut. It maintains itself and is intent on other’s benefit while also being tolerant.

In effect, this verse indicates that one must become Lord Hari’s and then glorify His name otherwise the efforts in uttering His name become a *sādhana* (an independent effort) and are therefore fruitless.

*nāmaikam yasya vāci smarana-patha-gatam śrotra-mūlam gatam vā  
śuddham vāśuddha-varṇam vyavahita-rahitam tārayaty eva satyam |  
tac ced deha-draviṇa-janatā-lobha-pāṣaṇḍa-madhye  
nikṣiptam syān na phala-janakam śīghram evātra vipra || [Padma Purāṇa]*

“Even if the Holy name is uttered once, whether by speech by the way, or is come across accidentally in a line of thought or from memory or by hearing, whether the syllables are mentioned clearly or not or even if the mention has gaps, It will certainly elevate that person and this is a fact. However, the principal benefit of the name is not produced immediately. In other words, from the utterances “*haram riktam*” and “*rājamahīṣī*”, the names “Hari” and “Rama” are obtained. But, the names are separated by the syllables “*la*” and “*ja*”. In spite of this, the person who makes these utterances is deemed to have taken the names “Hari” and “Rama” and he also gets elevated as a result of such utterances. Nevertheless, the principal benefit, viz., *mamatva* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not arise.

Similarly, even if the name of Lord Hari appears proximately to one who is greedy in relation to his bodily pleasures, material well-being, wealth, kith and kin or is greedy overall or does not have any faith in the scriptures, the Holy name does not easily bestow the result. In other words, because of the focus being on cherishing and nourishing one’s body and associated matters, even if Śrī Harināma is employed, *prīti* towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not arise immediately, rather, it appears delayed *i.e.* when such deficiencies are removed due to associating with great devotees, then *prīti* towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears.”

## THE MEANS TO ATTAIN BHAGAVĀN ACCORDING TO THE ŚRĪMAD BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

*arjuna uvāca*

*evam satata-yuktā ye bhaktās tvām paryupāsate |*  
*ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktam teṣāṁ ke yoga-vittamāḥ ||12.1||*

Arjuna asked: Those one-pointed *bhaktas* (*bhaktas* with no motive other than performing *bhakti*) who worship You as mentioned earlier,\* having firm faith in You always, and others who only worship *Brahman* that is *avyakta* (imperceptible) and *akṣara* (imperishable) – amongst these two kinds of worshippers, who is the most excellent knower of *yoga*?

(Here Arjuna wants to know who is the best – a *bhakti-yogī* or a *jñāna-yogī*)

*\*mat-karma-kṛn mat-paramo mad-bhaktah saṅga-varjitah |*  
*nirvairah sarva-bhūteṣu yah sa mām eti pāṇḍava ||11.55||*

O Pāṇḍava! That person who acts only for Me, who has Me as his highest aim, who is My devotee, is devoid of association that is averse to Me and is without a feeling of enmity towards every creature, attains Me.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*

*mayy āveśya mano ye mām nitya-yuktā upāsate |*  
*śraddhayaḥ parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ ||12.2||*

Śrī Bhagavān said –

Those who are always engaged in My *upāsana* (worshipful service) with *śraddhā* devoid of the three *guṇas*, keeping their mind engrossed in Me, are the best knowers of *yoga*. Such is My opinion.

*kleśo'dhikataras teṣāṁ avyaktāsakta-cetasām |*  
*avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham dehavadbhīr avāpyate ||12.5||*

He whose mind is fully engrossed in formless *Brahman* faces extreme suffering, for the way of the formless is attained with misery by those who identify themselves with their body.

*ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi samnyasya mat-parāḥ |*  
*ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate ||12.6||*  
*teṣāṁ aham samuddhartā mṛtyu-saṁsāra-sāgarāt |*  
*bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayy āveśita-cetasām ||12.7||*

However, those who in order to attain Me have completely renounced all activities which are harmful to devotion, becoming fully dedicated to Me, worship Me while meditating on Me through unswerving *bhakti-yoga*. These devotees O Pārtha! Whose minds are absorbed in Me, I personally raise them from the ocean of *saṁsāra* beset with death very quickly. [Renouncing activities means renouncing the independent performance of activities for it is not possible to renounce activities completely. One must surrender himself and then perform the activities.]

*mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya |*  
*nivasiṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ ||12.8||*

Engage your mind in Me alone (in My original forms such as Śyāmasundara), place your intelligence only in Me; in other words, keep reflecting on Me. By doing so, hereafter you will reside near Me. There is no doubt about this at all.

*atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram |*  
*abhyāsa-yogena tato mām icchāptum dhanan̐jaya ||12.9||*

O Dhanan̐jaya! If you are not able to steadily concentrate your mind on Me, then desire to attain Me through *abhyāsa-yoga* (yoga of practice).

*abhyāse'py asamartho'si mat-karma-paramo bhava |*  
*mad-artham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi ||12.10||*

If you are incapable even of such practice, become engaged only in My activities; in other words, perform activities that are related to Me, such as hearing, singing, cleaning the temple, serving *Go*, serving *Guru* and so on. By doing activities for Me in this manner, you will attain perfection, i.e. you will attain Me.

*athaitad apy aśakto'si kartum mad-yogam āśritah |*  
*sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam tataḥ kuru yatātmavān ||12.11||*

If you are incapable even of being dedicated to My activities, then, taking shelter of My *yoga* where the fruit of all one's activities is offered to Me,\* and having your mind under control, renounce the fruits of all actions.

*\*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat |*  
*yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpanam ||9.27||*

O son of Kuntī! Whatever actions you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you do, whatever you give away and whatever austerities you perform, offer them all to Me.

*śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānam viśiṣyate |*  
*dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgac chāntir anantaram ||12.12||*

This is because knowledge characterized by keeping one's intelligence engrossed in Me alone is superior to practice, and meditation on Me is superior even to such knowledge. Through

such meditation the fruits of actions are naturally renounced, and after such renouncing one obtains peace. [Unless one's mind is not fixed on *Bhagavān*, which means, unless he has surrendered completely to *Bhagavān*, he cannot renounce the fruits of actions.]

*adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |*  
*nirmamo nirahamkāraḥ sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣamī ||*  
*saṁtuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dr̥dha-niścayaḥ |*  
*mayy arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||12.13-14||*

Devoid of hatred towards every living being, friendly, compassionate, free from ideas of possession and ego-consciousness, equanimous when obtaining both happiness and misery, forgiving (bestowing fearlessness even to an offender), completely satisfied, always connected with Me through *bhakti-yoga*, free from agitation, of firm conviction concerning Me, with his mind and intelligence offered to Me – such a devotee of Mine is dear to Me. That is to say, he gives Me a lot of delight. [This does not mean that the devotee is unfit for action. He recognises the presence of *Bhagavān* everywhere, has all emotions under control and utilises his emotions as required to carry out his activities keeping prudence (*nīti*) and propriety (*nyāya*) in mind. While the devotee does not have hatred towards anyone, it does not mean that he tolerates any improper conduct or tendency in someone.]

*yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ |*  
*harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ ||12.15||*

That devotee of Mine because of whom nobody gets disturbed and who himself does not get disturbed by anybody, and who is free from elation, lack of forbearance, fear and agitation is dear to Me.

*anapekṣaḥ śucir dakṣa udāsīno gata-vyathaḥ |*  
*sarvārambha-parityāgī yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||12.16||*

That devotee of Mine who does not depend on material actions; is clean both externally and internally; is an expert, i.e. is capable of critically deliberating on the meaning of the scriptures by himself; is indifferent, in other words, has no attachment for mundane people; is free from perturbation; renounces all kinds of mundane endeavours both seen and unseen, i.e. one who is free from all kinds of undertakings that are not favourable to *bhakti*, is dear to Me.

*yo na hr̥syati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati |*  
*śubhāsubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||12.17||*

He who does not rejoice on obtaining something that is dear to him nor feels hatred on getting something unpleasant; he who does not grieve when something dear to him is destroyed or lost nor hankers for something he does not have; he who completely gives up sin and piety knowing that both are obstacles to *bhakti*; and he who has devotion for Me – such a person is dear to Me. [The devotee gives up useless attachments.]



*samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mārāpamānayoḥ |*  
*śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitaḥ ||12.18||*  
*tulya-nindā-stutir maunī samtusṭo yena kenacit |*  
*aniketaḥ sthira-matir bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ ||12.19||*

Alike to foe and friend, in honour and dishonour, in cold and heat, happiness or distress, free from attachment to mundane objects, treating both insult and praise the same, of controlled speech, always meditating on his beloved deity, totally satisfied with whatever is obtained for the sake of maintaining his body and related things, free from the sense of belongingness and attachment to the place of living, of steady intelligence and devoted to Me – such a person is dear to Me. [Alike to foe and friend does not mean indifferent action but propriety in dealings recognising the presence of *Bhagavān* in every living being. Since *Bhagavān* is the seat of *mamatva*, one has *mamatva* towards every living being while conducting himself through prudence and propriety. That is the way to maintain *dharma*.]

*ye tu dharmyāmṛtam idaṁ yathoktaṁ paryupāsate |*  
*śraddadhānā mat-paramā bhaktās te’iva me priyāḥ ||12.20||*

But those faithful devotees of Mine who properly perform worship of this nectar in the form of *dharma* (described in the verses 12.2 – 12.20), being fully dedicated to Me, are extremely dear to Me.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetram ity abhidhīyate |*  
*etad yo veti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña itī tadvidāḥ ||13.1||*  
*kṣetrajñaṁ cāpi mām viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata |*  
*kṣetra-kṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama ||13.2||*

Śrī *Bhagavān* said: O son of Kuntī! This body, which is a place of enjoyments, is called “*kṣetra*” (field), and the one who knows it is called “*kṣetrajña*” (knower of the field). It is said so by the learned who know the secret about both of them.

It follows that because of knowledge of the *kṣetra*, the *jīvātmā* has been said to be *kṣetrajña*. But as *Paramātmā* knows all *kṣetras* or bodies in a much more complete form, His being *kṣetrajña* is being described next.

O Bhārata! Know Me, the *Paramātmā*, Who am situated in every *kṣetra* as the governing factor, to be also *kṣetrajña*. Thus, the knowledge about the *kṣetra* in the form of body as well as the *kṣetrajñas* in the form of *jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* is actually true knowledge. This is my opinion.

*jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvāmṛtam āsnute |*  
*anādi matparam brahma na sat tan nāsad ucyate ||13.12||*

I will tell you in a distinguished form as to what is to be known, by knowing which one achieves liberation. That *Brahman* which is without beginning (*anādi*) and is dependent on Me is said to be neither *sat* nor *asat*; in other words, is beyond cause and effect.

*iti kṣetraṁ tathā jñānam jñeyam cokatam samāsataḥ |  
mad-bhakta etad vijñāya mad-bhāvāyopapadyate ||13.19||*

Thus *kṣetra* (field), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *jñeya* (what is to be known) have been shown in a concise manner. Knowing all these properly, My devotee becomes eligible for obtaining My *premā*.

*samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantam parameśvaram |  
vinaśyatsv avinaśyantam yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||13.28||*

He who sees the *Parameśvara* (Supreme Lord) abiding equally in all living beings, as the indestructible amidst the destructible - he actually sees things as they are.

*samam paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram |  
na hinasty ātmanātmānam tato yāti parām gatim ||13.29||*

Because of seeing the *Parameśvara* abiding equally everywhere, he does not degrade himself through his mind and therefore reaches the supreme destination. [Seeing *Bhagavān* everywhere does not mean inaction but favourable action towards every living entity recognising the presence of the conscious principle and *Bhagavān* everywhere while maintaining propriety in dealings.]

*yathā sarva-gataṁ saukṣmyād ākāśam nopalipyate |  
sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate ||13.33||*

Just as the ether (space), which is present everywhere, does not become contaminated because it is subtle, in the same way the *Paramātmā*, Who is situated everywhere in the body, is not contaminated by the merits and defects of the body.

*kṣetra-kṣetrajñayor evaṁ antaram jñāna-cakṣuṣā |  
bhūta-prakṛti-mokṣam ca ye vidur yānti te param ||13.35||*

One who knows the difference between *kṣetra* and the two *kṣetrajñas* (*jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā*) as also the means for deliverance of the living beings from the *prakṛti* (material nature) through *jñāna-cakṣu* (eye of knowledge) reaches the supreme destination.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
param bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānam jñānam uttamam |  
yaj jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parām siddhim ito gatāḥ ||14.1||*

I shall tell you again the supreme knowledge – the best of all kinds of knowledges, knowing which all the sages have attained the absolute perfection characterised by liberation from this transmigratory existence.

*idaṁ jñānam upāsṛitya mama sādharmaṁ āgatāḥ |  
sarge'pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca ||14.2||*

By taking shelter of this knowledge, the sages, having attained the same nature as Me, i.e. having attained the *sārūpya* liberation (obtaining a form similar to that of *Bhagavān*), are not born again even at the time of creation nor are they distressed at the time of dissolution.

*nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāram yadā draṣṭānupaśyati |  
guṇebhyaś ca param vetti mad-bhāvaṁ so'dhigacchati ||14.19||*

When the *jīva* who is a witness does not experience anyone else other than the three *guṇas* as the doer of activities and understands that the *ātmā* is superior to the three *guṇas* and also different from them, then he attains My nature (*sāyujya*). (Even though this kind of knowledge occurs, in order to attain My *bhāva*, supreme *bhakti* unto Me (*parā-bhakti*) is a necessity. This is clarified in 14.26)

*mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāri-pakṣayoḥ |  
sarvārambha-parityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate ||14.25||*

He who is the same in honour and dishonour, the same towards friend and foe, i.e. seeing *Bhagavān* in both of them and deals with them as required by the circumstance, and who completely renounces all activities other than those that nourish *bhakti*, is said to have transcended the *guṇas*.

*mām ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate |  
sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate ||14.26||*

He who performs pleasing service to Me alone (to Kṛṣṇa) through the unswerving *yoga* of devotion (devotional service that is free from guile), thoroughly crosses over these *guṇas* and becomes eligible to experience *Brahman*.

*brahmano hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca |  
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca ||14.27||*

This is because I am the shelter of *Brahman*, which is the preeminent shelter of the creation itself, as well as of immortal (indestructible) liberation. I am the foundation of the supreme *dharma* called *bhakti* which is eternally present in both the practising and perfected stage, and I am also the foundation of the happiness, i.e. *premā*, of an unswerving devotee (who has no motivation other than *bhakti*) which is attained through this supreme *dharma*.

(Therefore, since everything depends on Me, he who worships and serves Me with a desire to experience no difference between Me and him (*kaivalya*) also attains the status of *Brahman* that entails merging into *Brahman*.)

[The *Brahman* which such spiritualists aspire to merge is explained in Hari-varṇa:

*tat-param paramaṁ brahma sarvaṁ vibhajate jagat |  
mamaiva tad ghanam tejo jñātum arhasi bhārata || [Hari-Vaṁśa. 2.114.11]*

Know O Bhārata! That the Supreme *Brahman* that is superior to matter and which differentiates the material and spiritual worlds is actually My effulgence only.

It is also explained in *Brahma-Saṁhitā* [5.40]—

*yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-  
koṭīśv aśeṣa-vasudhādi-vibhūti-bhinnaṁ |  
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ  
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi ||*

I worship that original person Govinda the effulgence of whose splendor appears in various forms in the infinite crores of universes and called by terms such as *Brahman*, *niṣkala* (undivided) and *ananta* (endless).

*Brahman* is the effulgence of the realm of Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu. Being beyond the realm of material world and yet not inside spiritual world, *Brahman* is the destination of those who wish to merge with the Lord. Since, they are not qualified to enter the spiritual world, they merge into *Bhagavān*'s effulgence which is called as *Brahman*.]

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
ūrdhva-mūlam adhaḥ-śākham aśvattham prāhur avyayam |  
chandāmsi yasya parṇāni yas tam veda sa vedavit ||15.1||*

This mundane existence has been said to be an *aśvattha* (pipal) tree which has its roots upwards and branches downwards, the Vedas being its leaves. He who knows this tree is the knower of Vedas.

The following is the translation of the commentary Sārārtha-Varṣiṇī-Ṭīkā by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākkura to this verse.

In this fifteenth chapter three things have been described: the detachment which cuts asunder *saṁsāra* or transmigratory existence, *jīvātmā* being an *aṁśa* (portion) of *Bhagavān*, and Kṛṣṇa Who is the *Uttama-puruṣa* (Supreme Person), being superior to both *jīvā* and *Brahman*.

In the previous chapter (14.26) it has been said: “He who performs pleasing service to Me alone (to Kṛṣṇa) through the unswerving *yoga* of devotion (devotional service free from guile), thoroughly crosses over these *guṇas* and becomes eligible to experience *Brahman*.” If the question is asked “How can one attain impersonal *Brahman* by *bhakti-yoga* rendered to You, a human?” in response it is said (14.27): “It is true that indeed I am a human, but it is Me Who is the foundation, or Supreme shelter, of even *Brahman*.” This fifteenth chapter begins with the explanation of this point.

In 14.26 it has been said: “He thoroughly crosses over these *guṇas* and becomes eligible to experience *Brahman*.” Following this statement, what then is this material world which is made up of the *guṇas*? From where has it come forth? Who is actually this *jīva* who by *bhakti* unto You crosses over the *saṁsāra* and becomes eligible to experience *Brahman*?



What is actually that *Brahman*? And as per the statement (14.27) “I am the shelter of *Brahman*”, who are You, being the foundation of *Brahman*?

In order to address such questions, employing the figure of speech called hyperbole, He describes the material existence by comparing it to a wondrous *aśvattha* tree.

Upwards, *i.e.* above all the worlds in *satyaloka*, four-faced *Brahmā*, who is made of *mahat-tattva*, being the first sprout from the seed of *prakṛti* (material nature), is the root of the tree.

Downwards, *i.e.* (below *satyaloka*) in the planets of *svarga*, *bhuva* and *bhūloka* etc. there are its innumerable branches in form of infinite *devatas*, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, *asuras*, *rākṣasas*, *pretas*, *bhūtas*, humans, *Go*, horses and other animals, birds, worms, insects, flying insects and non-moving living entities.

Since that *aśvattha* (Pipal) tree makes it possible to attain the four human goals starting with *dharma*, it has been termed “*aśvattha*”, *i.e.* the best tree.

Another meaning of this is as follows: for those who are devotees, this *saṁsāra* (mundane existence) will not last till the following day (*a + śvaḥ*) and therefore it is *aśvattha*. In other words, (for them) this *saṁsāra* is bound to be destroyed. But for non-devotees, it is undecaying, or imperishable.

Vedas in this verse refer to those Vedas which propound *karma* (fruitive activities) in injunctive statements such as “*vāyavyam śvetam ālabheta bhūmikām* – To propitiate Wind-devata, those desiring land shall touch a white mustard seed” or “*aīndram ekādaśaka-pālaṁ nirvapet prajākāmah* – Those desiring offspring shall present eleven *kapālas* (offerings in clay pots) to Indra”. As these Vedas expand this (tree of) *saṁsāra*, they are its leaves. Indeed, the tree is beautiful only by its leaves. He who knows this tree is the knower of Vedas.

It is also mentioned in the Kaṭhavalī-Śruti (2.3.1): “*ūrdhva-mūlo’vāk-śākha eṣo’śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ* – This *aśvattha* tree (*saṁsāra*) that has roots upwards and branches downwards is eternal.”

*adhaś cordhvaṁ prasṛtās tasya śākhā*  
*guṇa-pravṛddhā viṣaya-pravālāḥ |*  
*adhaś ca mūlāny anusamītatāni*  
*karmānubandhinī manuṣya-loke ||15.2||*

With objects of sense perception as their sprouts, the branches of that *saṁsāra* tree which are nourished by the three *guṇas viz.*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, have spread both below, *i.e.* amongst the species such as animals, and above, *i.e.*, amongst the higher species such as *devatas*. All those roots which depend on *karma* are continually expanding downwards in the world of humans.

The translation of the commentary Sārārtha-Varṣiṇī-Ṭīkā by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākkura to this verse :



“Below” refers to species such as animals, “above” means in species such as *devas*. The branches of that *saṁsāra* tree sprinkled by the water of actions pertaining to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* have expanded (below and above). The objects of sense perception such as sound are the sprouts of that tree.

Apart from that, it is inferred that in the root of the tree there is a certain great treasure unperceived by anybody.

Similar to branches of a pipal tree, there are secondary or external roots in the branches of that *aśvattha* tree as well (which itself is suspended from the main roots). These external tangles are referred to in the second part of the verse. Even though the (main) root is in *brahmaloka*, all the (secondary) roots are continually expanding in the *manuṣyaloka* (world of humans) which is below *brahmaloka*, being supported by the *karma* (actions) of the humans. This is to say that after undergoing the results of one’s *karma*, it is in the human form of life that one generates new *karma* again.

*na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādir na ca sampratiṣṭhā |*  
*aśvattham enaṁ su-virūḍha-mūlam asaṅga-śastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā ||15.3||*  
*tataḥ padam tat parimārgitavyam yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyah |*  
*tam eva cādyam puruṣam prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī ||15.4||*

There is no perception of the form of this *aśvattha* tree in the world of humans, nor are perceived its beginning, end or what supports it. By cutting asunder this deeply rooted *aśvattha* tree with the weapon of non-attachment, that is to say of complete detachment (towards wordly objects), that place must be sought by attaining which saints do not take birth again. I take shelter of that Original Person from Whom this ancient *saṁsāra* has expanded.

The translation of the commentary Sārārtha-Varṣiṇī-Ṭīkā by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākkura to this verse:

The form and nature of this *aśvattha*, having the characteristics that were described above, can certainly not be perceived in this world of humans. This is because of a variety in the opinions of adherents to various doctrines, like “The world is *satya* (real)”, “The world is *mithya* (false)”, “The world is *nitya* (eternal)” and so on. As such deliberations go on unsettled, it is without an end, and being *anādi* it is without a beginning; it has no foundational support, either. That is to say, due to the absence of *tattva-jñāna* (knowledge of reality) one cannot get answers to questions like “What is its foundation?”, “What is this tree?” etc.

In any case, knowing that non-attachment is the weapon which cuts asunder this tree of *saṁsāra*, the abode of misery for all living entities, and then by cutting the tree of *saṁsāra* with it, one must seek that great treasure which is situated in the base of its root. This is what is expressed in the second part of the verse 15.3.

The word “non-attachment” (*asaṅga*) refers to “being detached” or “indifferent” (*anāśakti*). After cutting the tree of *saṁsāra* using this weapon of detachment which is like an axe, *i.e.*, after separating oneself from this *saṁsāra*, one must seek that place or reality, *i.e.*, that *Brahman* which is in the form of a great treasure present in its root.

What is the nature of that place? To answer that, it is said: By going where, *i.e.*, after attaining which place, the *mahātmas* do not come again into this *saṁsāra*. How should one seek it? It is said: I adore and serve that Original Person from Whom this *saṁsāra*, existing from ancient times, has expanded. That is to say, one should seek it through *bhakti*. [One must be *ānukūla* (being favourable) and be devoid of *prātikūlya* (being unfavourable). *Prātikūlya* means *anyābhilāṣitā* and *jñāna-karmādy-āvṛtam* (Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu 1.1.11), *i.e.* the tendency of having any other desires than to be favourable and to be covered by the likes of knowledge meant for the purpose of liberation and fruitive activities (both *sakāma* and *niṣkāma*). That is also called as *kapaṭatā* or duplicity. The term “*tataḥ param*” means that the tree does not continue to the *parama-pada* but stops within the material world in *brahma-loka* and it is possible to go to the *parama-pada* only through the grace of *Bhagavān*’s *svarūpā-śakti* (inherent ability) and hence, *bhakti* has been mentioned here. *Bhakti* is *Bhagavān*’s *svarūpā-śakti*.]

*nirmāna-mohā jīta-saṅga-doṣā*  
*adhyātma-nityā vinivṛtta-kāmāḥ |*  
*dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukha-duḥkha-saṁjñair*  
*gacchanty amūḍhāḥ padam avyayam tat ||15.5||*

By attaining *bhakti* for that Original Person, what characteristics do the *bhaktas* who attain that abode have? This is mentioned here:

That person, whose material conceptions and delusion of the mind have been destroyed; who has conquered the defect of mundane attachment; who, engaged in reflecting on his eternal and temporal duties, becomes fully dedicated to deliberation related to *Paramātmā*; whose all other desires have disappeared completely and who knows the manner of performing *śaraṇāgati* (seeking complete shelter) that is free from the dualities called happiness and misery, attains that indestructible supreme abode. [*Bhagavān* is showing the *sādhana* (means for a goal) and the *sādhya* (goal attained through the means), both of which are in *svarūpā-śakti*, also known as *antaraṅga-śakti*. *Bahiraṅga-śakti*, the external ability that constitutes this material world composed of three modes of nature is incapable of being a *sādhana*. Once the devotee gets *bhakti*, he does not get bound again by the *bahiraṅga-śakti* since the *bahiraṅga-śakti* is incapable of touching a *jīva* under the shelter of *antaraṅga-śakti*. *Antaraṅga-śakti* is like the sunlight while *Bahiraṅga-śakti* is like darkness.]

*na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śāsāṅko na pāvakaḥ |*  
*yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama ||15.6||*

What is that Supreme abode like? To answer that, it is said:

By attaining it, the *śaraṇāgata* (person who has taken complete shelter of *Bhagavān*) does not come back – such is My Supreme abode. It can neither be illuminated by sun nor by moon nor by fire. That is to say, My Supreme abode is self-illuminating. [The spiritual abode is made of *Bhagavān*'s *svarūpā-śakti* and hence is of the same nature as *Bhagavān*. An idea of *Bhagavān*'s Supreme abode can be obtained from the following verse in Śrī-Brahma-Saṁhita:

*ānanda cinmaya rasa pratibhāvitābhis  
tābhir ya eva nija rūpatayā kalābhiḥ |  
goloka eva nivasaty akhilātma bhūto  
govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi* || [Brahma Saṁhita 37]

“I worship the Original Person Govinda Who, inspite of there being numerous devotees everywhere, stays in Goloka with the Supreme *Lakṣmīs* who are extremely dear to Him and are all forms of *hlādinī-śakti*, His own *svarūpā-śakti*. He imbues their hearts with *prīti* that is born of His own nature and when they express their *mamatva* towards Him through their hearts that have been imbued with *prīti* by Him, He is again influenced by the resulting *rasa* called “*ānanda-cinmaya*” (full of bliss and knowledge) because of Which He always stays with them in Goloka.”

The essential nature of *Bhagavān* is that He is the very embodiment of all *rasas*.

*raso vai saḥ* [Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7]

“He is verily *rasa* (The supreme delight of existence)”

*sa ekāki na ramate* [Mahopaniṣad 1]

“He, being alone does not feel delightful by Himself.”

For the purpose of relishing Himself, He desires to become many.

*so'kāmayata bahu syām* [Taittirīya.Upaniṣad. 2.6.2]:

“He desired ‘let me become many’”

His essential nature of being the very embodiment of *rasa* and His desiring to become many for the sake of relishing are due to His infinite intrinsic abilities, called *śaktis*.

*eka-deśa-sthitasyāgner jyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā |  
parasya brahmaṇaḥ śaktis tathedam akhilaṁ jagat* || [Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.22.56]

"Just like how the light of a fire situated in one place is spread all around, similarly, the *śakti* (ability) of the Supreme Lord is spread all around the universe."

The relationship between *Bhagavān* and everything else that exists is called *śakti-śaktimattvaṁ* (the relationship between ability and the able). The relationship between Him

and His *śaktis* is like the relationship between fire and its ability to burn. Just as the ability of fire to burn is both one with the fire being intrinsic in it and is also different from the fire because of being felt away from the fire, this creation is one with and different from *Bhagavān*.

It is not possible to separate fire and its ability to burn. Both exist together in their completeness but the ability to burn can be felt separately. *Bhagavān* however manifests His *śakti* (ability) separately in this manner for the purpose of relishing the bliss of *mamatva* that is born of His own nature.

Even if His *śaktis* are manifested separately in all their entirety, still, *Bhagavān*, being the *śaktimān* remains undiminished.

*pūrṇam adah pūrṇam idam pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate |*  
*pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate ||* [Iśāvāsya Upaniṣad]

From the original Person Who is complete, another complete Person is manifest and even though a complete Person has come from the original complete person, what remains is the original complete Person indeed.

The desire by *Bhagavān* to become many or to relish occurs intrinsically because of His *śaktis*. However, it does not happen due to selfishness but due to the desire to give bliss to others. He does the same both in this material world and in the spiritual world. However, He does this through His own associates who are all forms of His own *śaktis*. The fire cannot relish its own ability to burn, but *Bhagavān* can do it because of His *śaktis* being *acintya*. 'Acintya' means they are inconceivable by any logical means but are known only through knowledge that is inferred from the scriptures.

*acintyāḥ khalu ye bhāvā na tāṁs tarkeṇa sādhayet |*  
*prakṛtibhyaḥ param yat tu tad acintyasya lakṣaṇam ||* [Mahābhārata 6.6.11]

*acintya vastu* or inconceivable real objects are not perceivable through *tarka* or logic. An object that is beyond material nature is called as *acintya*.

*ātmeśvaro 'tarkya-sahasra-śaktiḥ |* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.3]

"You are the controller of living entities and are endowed with thousands of *śaktis* (abilities) that surpass logical reasoning."

Thus, though the forms of His associates are essentially His own forms, for the purpose of relishing the bliss of *mamatva* that is born of His own nature of being the very embodiment of *rasa*, He manifests such forms.

A contrast between *Bhagavān's* abode and this material world and the difference between the dealings in both the abodes can be known from the following verse from Śrī-Brahma-Saṁhita:



*ānanda cinmaya rasātmayā manaḥsu  
yaḥ prāṇināṁ pratiphalan smaratām upetya |  
līlāyitena bhuvanāni jayaty ajasraṁ  
govindam ādi puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi || [Brahma Saṁhita 42]*

“I worship that Original person Govinda Who, through the reflection of an infinitesimal *aṁśa* of the “*ānanda-cinmaya-rasa*” that is born of His own nature; makes such reflection appear in the *antaḥkaraṇa* of all the living creatures manifesting as carnal desire in this world and Who, through this pastime, is ever victorious over the three worlds.”]

*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ |  
manaḥ-śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛti-sthāni karṣati ||15.7||*

The eternal *jīva* who is verily My own *aṁśa* (my ever separated portion that is yet different from Me – *vibhinnāṁśa*), being in this world of *jīvas*, attracts the six sense organs including the mind which are situated in *prakṛti* (material nature). (The six sense organs are the five organs that grant perception of the external world, like the organ of hearing, etc., plus the mind which is the sixth); [The *jīva* is a *vibhinnāṁśa*, i.e. is an *aṁśa* of the *jīva-śakti-viśiṣṭha-paramātmā* (*Paramātmā* who is qualified by the *jīva-śakti*). Hence, the *jīva*, being marginal in nature, does not have the *svarūpā-śakti* like *Paramātmā* and therefore gets bound by *bahiraṅga-śakti*. For the same reason, *Paramātmā* does not get bound by *bahiraṅga-śakti*. Thus, the *svarūpa* of the *jīva* is totally different from the *svarūpa* of the *Paramātmā*, even though it is an *aṁśa* of *Paramātmā*. The meaning of the term *aṁśa* is not to be taken in the normal sense of “portion” or “part” of the whole.]

*śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanāṁ ghrāṇam eva ca |  
adhiṣṭhāya manaś cāyaṁ viṣayān upasevate ||15.9||*

This *jīva* takes shelter of the sense organs of hearing (ear), sight (eye), touch (skin), taste (tongue), smell (nose) and mind and through them enjoys the objects of those senses such as sound etc. [*Bhagavān* is describing the difference between matter which is inert and the conscious principle (*cetana-tattva*).]

*utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhuñjānam vā guṇānvitam |  
vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ ||15.10||*

Be it while leaving the body, while staying in the body or while enjoying objects of the senses, unintelligent persons devoid of discrimination do not know the *jīva* who is attached to sense organs etc. However, those discriminative persons who have the eyes of knowledge do know.

*yatanto yogināś cainam paśyanty ātmany avasthitam |  
yatanto'py akṛtātmāno nainam paśyanty acetasaḥ ||15.11||*

The *yogīs* of conscious efforts experience this *ātmā* situated in the body, while persons of impure mind and devoid of discriminative knowledge are not able to experience this *jīvātmā*



in spite of striving. [The experience here is the experience of the conscious principle (*cetana-tattva*). By experiencing this first, they experience *Paramātmā* Who is the guide of all conscious beings. *Cetanatā* or consciousness is the essential nature of the *ātmā*.]

*yad āditya-gataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayate'khilam |*  
*yac candramasi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam | |*  
*gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy aham ojasā |*  
*puṣṇāmi cauśadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakāḥ | |*  
*aham vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇinām deham āśritaḥ |*  
*prāṇāpāna-samāyuktaḥ pacāmy annam catur-vidham | |15.12-14| |*

Whatever is there to be attained by the *jīva* in his bound state, it is I, being the essence of the sun, moon and other objects, Who supply all that to him. This is being said in the three verses beginning with 15.12:

The light in the sun which illuminates the entire universe as well as that in the moon and in the fire – know that to be Mine alone.

And being situated in the Earth, I through My *śakti* (energy), maintain all the living beings, both mobile and immobile. Becoming the moon that has the nature of *rasa*, i.e., is full of nectar, I nourish all the herbs, that is to say, all the vegetation.

Dwelling in the bodies of living beings as the digestive fire, and coming together with *prāṇa* and *apāṇa* airs, I digest the four types of food (chewed, sucked, licked and swallowed) eaten by them.

*sarvasya cāham hr̥di samniviṣṭo*  
*mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca |*  
*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo*  
*vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham | |15.15| |*

I, indeed, am present in the heart of all living beings in the form of *buddhi-tattva* (intelligence principle). Therefore, remembrance of previously experienced objects, knowledge of the objects and the destruction of both of these (remembrance and knowledge) take place because of Me alone.

(Having thus shown how He helps the *jīva* in his bound condition, He now describes how He assists the *jīva* to obtain whatever is needed in the liberated state.)

I only am fit to be known through all the Vedas, and I alone am the author of Vedānta and the knower of the Vedas.

*dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣarāś cākṣara eva ca |*  
*kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate | |15.16| |*

Since I am the knower of Vedas, I will now tell you the essence of all the Vedas in a concise manner through the three following verses. Listen to them -

In this material universe of fourteen worlds there are two kinds of conscious beings (*puruṣas*) – *kṣara* and *akṣara*. All the living beings, both mobile and immobile, are called “*kṣara*”, that is to say *jīvas* who deviate from their *svārūpa* (nature); while the unchangeable; i.e. *Brahman*, Who does not deviate from His *svārūpa*, is called “*akṣara*”.

***uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyah paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ |***  
***yo loka-trayam āviśya bibharty avyaya īśvaraḥ ||15.17||***

After mentioning the *Brahman* that is worshipped by the *jñānīs*, I am now describing the *Paramātmā* that is worshipped by the *yogīs*.

However, other than *jīva* and *Brahman* mentioned before, there is a Supreme Person called *Paramātmā*. This *Paramātmā* is both the controller (*īśvara*) and is free from transformations (*nirvikāra*). He alone enters the three worlds, sustains them and nourishes them.

***yasmāt kṣaram atīto’ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ |***  
***ato’smi loka vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ||15.18||***

After describing *Paramātmā* Who is worshipped by the *yogīs*, now, while describing *Bhagavān* Who is worshipped by the *bhaktas*, He also shows the supreme excellence of His own inherent form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Since I am beyond the *jīvātmā* and am also superior to *Brahman* as well as *Paramātmā*, consequently, I am renowned both amongst the people and in the Vedas by the name of *Puruṣottama* (Supreme Person).

***yo mām evam asaṁmūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam |***  
***sa sarva-vid bhajati mām sarva-bhāvena bhārata ||15.19||***

O Bhārata! He who does not get bewildered by various arguments of different philosophers, and knows Me alone as the *Puruṣottama*, is actually the knower of everything; in all respects, he renders devotional service only to Me. [*Bhagavān* is making the conviction in the worshipper steady by explaining about Himself in the last few verses.]

***iti guhyatamaṁ śāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha |***  
***etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛta-kṛtyaś ca bhārata ||15.20||***

O sinless Bhārata! This most secret *śāstra* has thus been said by Me. By knowing it, the human being becomes wise (a *parokṣajñānavān* – one who has knowledge without experience) and becomes a *kṛta-kṛtya* (accomplisher of purpose i.e., he becomes an *aparokṣajñānavān* - a person having knowledge born out of direct experience).

***ahamkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca saṁśritāḥ |***  
***mām ātma-para-deheṣu pradviṣanto’bhyasūyakāḥ ||16.18||***  
***tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān saṁsāreṣu narādhamān |***  
***kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān āsurīṣv eva yoniṣu ||16.19||***

Resorting to self-conceit (*ahamkāra*), force, arrogance, lust and anger, the *āsuric* persons hate Me Who am present in the bodies of saintly persons devoted to serving *Paramātmā*, and they also find faults in the meritorious qualities of the virtuous.

I hurl such lowest of men who hate the saintly people, who are cruel and who perform inauspicious activities, again and again in the *āsuric* species of this *samsāra* only.

*tri-vidhaṁ narakasyedaṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ |*  
*kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet ||16.21||*  
*etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamo-dvārais tribhir naraḥ |*  
*ācaratya ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti parāṁ gatim ||16.22||*

Lust, anger and greed are the three gateways to hell which destroy the self, that is to say, which degrade the *jīva*. Therefore these three are to be given up.

O son of Kuntī! That person who is freed from these three gateways to hell conducts himself in a manner that is beneficial to him, and thus obtains the most excellent destination.

*yah śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāma-kārataḥ |*  
*na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim ||16.23||*

The person who, disregarding the injunctions of *śāstra*, acts independently as directed by his mind, attains neither perfection, i.e., does not reach *Bhagavān*, nor happiness nor the supreme destination.

*tasmāc chāstraṁ pramāṇam te kāryākārya-vyavasthitau |*  
*jñātvā śāstra-vidhānoktaṁ karma kartum ihārhasi ||16.24||*

Therefore, when ascertaining what is to be done and what is not to be done, *śāstra* alone is the authority (*pramāṇa*) for you. Knowing the action that is to be done as prescribed in *śāstra*, (you will) become qualified to perform that action (thus) established.

*arjuna uvāca*  
*ye śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |*  
*teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvam āho rajas tamaḥ ||17.1||*

Arjuna asked: O Kṛṣṇa! What is the status of those persons who give up the injunctions of *śāstra* and with *laukika śraddhā* (which originates by hearing from various kinds of sources) perform activities like *yajña*? Is it in *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*?

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*tri-vidhā bhavati śraddhā dehinām sā svabhāvajā |*  
*sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu ||17.2||*

Śrī Bhagavān said:

Threefold is that *śraddhā* born of the nature of embodied beings, i.e. *śraddhā* which is produced out of their previous *saṁskāras* (impressions): *sāttvik*, *rājasik* and *tāmasik*. Hear about them.

*sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata |*  
*śraddhāmāyo'yaṁ puruṣo yo yac-chraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ||17.3||*

O Bhārata! Everyone's *śraddhā* corresponds to his nature, i.e. to his *antaḥkaraṇa* [internal sense organ which guides a person's thinking, feeling and willing and is a combination of mind, intelligence, *ahaṁkāra* and *citta* where each has a different function]. The person is made of his particular *śraddhā*, thus whatever being or object he reposes his *śraddhā* on, say for example a *devata*, his *antaḥkaraṇa* too will be just like that *devata* or object.

*yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ |*  
*pretān bhūta-gaṇāṁś cānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ||17.4||*

Those who are in *sattva-guṇa* worship *devatās*, those who are *rājasik* worship *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas* and those others who are *tāmasik* worship the *pretas* and *bhūtas*. [Due to *laukiki-śraddhā*, people follow various institutions, customs, traditions etc which include worship of various beings.]

*aśāstra-vihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ |*  
*dambhāhaṁkāra-saṁyuktāḥ kāma-rāga-balānvitāḥ ||17.5||*  
*karśayantaḥ śarīrastham bhūta-grāmam acetasaḥ |*  
*mām caivāntaḥ-śarīra-stham tāt viddhy āsura-niścayān ||17.6||*

Those indiscriminative persons who are given to hypocrisy and self-conceit, are possessed of desire and attachment to austerities, and have power, i.e. the ability to do dreadful austerities, are, by performing such austerities, wasting away the material elements such as earth situated in their bodies. They also give trouble to Me and to My part *jīvātmā* who are seated within their body. Know that the position of such people is *āsuric*. [*Bhagavān* is describing the tradition that was prevalent in the previous ages and even in this age and the result of such activities. It is therefore essential to act as per the scriptures.]

*aśraddhayā hutam dattam tapas taptam kṛtam ca yat |*  
*asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha ||17.28||*

O Pārtha! It is said that the sacrifices done without *śraddhā*, the offerings of gifts done without *śraddhā*, the austerities performed without *śraddhā* and whatever activity has been performed without *śraddhā* are all *asad*. Therefore, they neither give fruits in this world nor in the other.

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucam kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca |*  
*jñānam vijñānam āstikiyam brahma-karma svabhāvajam ||18.42||*

Serenity (control of the *antaḥkaraṇa*), self-control (restraint over external sense organs), austerity (tolerating physical strain approved by *śāstra*), external and internal cleanliness,

tolerance, simplicity (being devoid of crookedness), *jñāna* (understanding of superior and inferior principles from the *sāstra*), *vijñāna* (obtaining the exclusive *dharma* from that same *jñāna*), firm faith in the purports of *sāstra* – all these are the activities of the *brāhmaṇas* born of their nature.

*śauryam tejo dhṛtir dākṣyam yuddhe cāpy apalāyanam |*  
*dānam īśvara-bhāvaś ca kṣātram karma svabhāva-jam ||18.43||*

Heroism, power, steadfastness even in the face of adversities, skilfulness and not running away from the battle, offering gifts to others and the character of a governor, all these are the natural activities of *kṣatriyas*.

*kṛṣi-go-rakṣya-vāṇijyam vaiśya-karma svabhāva-jam |*  
*paricaryātmakam karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāva-jam ||18.44||*

Farming, protecting and nourishing *Go*, and trading are the natural activities of *vaiśyas*, while serving the twice-born is the natural activity of *śūdras*.

*sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ samsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ |*  
*sva-karma-nirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chrṇu ||18.45||*

Those human beings who engage themselves in their respective activities with complete dedication attain perfection (steadiness in *jñāna*). Hear how the person who becomes dedicated to activities that are according to his eligibility attains perfection.

*yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām yena sarvam idaṁ tatam |*  
*sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavah ||18.46||*  
*śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt |*  
*svabhāva-niyataṁ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam ||18.47||*  
*sahajam karma kaunteya sa-doṣam api na tyajet |*  
*sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ ||18.48||*

From Whom proceed activities of the *jīvas* such as birth, and by Whom this whole universe is pervaded – by worshipping that Supreme Lord through their prescribed actions humans attain perfection (steadiness in *jñāna*).

More beneficial than another's *dharma*, though followed in a perfect manner, is one's own *dharma* even if followed in a deficient way, because by performing those activities that are established by one's own nature, humans do not incur defects.

O son of Kuntī! Even if they are defective, one should not give up those activities that are natural to him because just as fire is covered by smoke, every activity is covered by some defect or the other.

[Instead of doing the activity and surrendering the results, *Bhagavān* wants surrendering oneself and then doing the activity – since it is not possible to do the first genuinely, because



of the strong attachment to the results. This is a natural quality in everyone. When one surrenders oneself, one performs the activities as *Bhagavān* would want it done.]

***asakta-buddhiḥ sarvatra jītātmā vigata-sprhaḥ |  
naiṣkarmya-siddhiṁ paramām samnyāsenādhigacchati ||18.49||***

One whose intelligence is always devoid of attachment to material objects, whose mind is controlled and whose longing for all kinds of happiness up to that of *Brahmaloka* has vanished, naturally attains the supreme perfection of freedom from action (*naiṣkarmya-siddhi*) by renouncing his activities. [It is not possible for anyone to give up all activities completely. One can only give up the tendency of doing activities expecting the results.]

***siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me |  
samāsenaiḥ kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā ||18.50||***

O son of Kuntī! Hear from Me in summary how one who has attained the freedom from action experiences *Brahman* and what is the supreme *niṣṭhā* or the best destination of *jñāna*.

***buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhr̥tyātmānam niyamya ca |  
śabdādīn viśayāṁś tyaktvā rāga-dveṣau vyudasya ca ||  
vivikta-sevī laghv-āśī yata-vāk-kāya-mānasah |  
dhyāna-yoga-paro nityaṁ vairāgyaṁ samupāśritaḥ ||  
ahamkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ parigrahaṁ |  
vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahma-bhūyāya kalpate ||18.51-53||***

Endowed with a pure intelligence, one who firmly controls his mind, who completely renounces likes and dislikes from afar giving up objects of the senses such as sound, who resides alone in an uninhabited place, who eats little, who engages his speech, body and mind in the object of meditation, who is totally dedicated to *dhyāna-yoga* in the form of contemplation on Hari, who takes shelter of perpetual distaste in matters other than the principle of *ātmā* and who gives up self-conceit, force, pride, desire, anger and acquisition (of material things) – such a supremely peaceful person who is free from the notion of “mine” becomes eligible to experience *Brahman*.

***brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati |  
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām ||18.54||***

Characterized by consciousness free from all contamination and misconceptions, that person who is a pure *ātmā* in the form of *Brahman* does not lament for an object that has been lost or hanker for an object that is not attained. Seeing all living beings equally (seeing *Bhagavān* everywhere), he attains *parā-bhakti*, or *bhakti* having the characteristics of *premā*, unto Me.

***bhaktiā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ |  
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tad-anantaram ||18.55||***

Through that *parā-bhakti*, he knows My intrinsic nature and My intrinsic qualities, and thus experiences Me just as I am. By knowing Me in truth through that *parā-bhakti*, he enters in Me; in other words, he gets immersed in the sweetness of My *bhakti-rasa*.

*cetasā sarva-karmāṇi mayi samnyasya mat-parah |  
buddhi-yogam upāśritya mac-cittaḥ satataṁ bhava ||18.57||*

Offering all your activities to Me mentally, becoming completely dedicated to Me and taking shelter of *vyavasāyātmika-buddhi-yoga* (yoga of intelligence with absolute conviction), become one whose mind is continually in Me; in other words, always keep remembering Me. [Unless one is free from doubts, he will not get absolute conviction.]

*tam eva śaraṇam gaccha sarva-bhāvena bhārata |  
tat-prasādāt parām śāntim sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatam ||18.62||*

O Bhārata! In all respects, take refuge in that Supreme Lord alone. By His grace, you will obtain both supreme peace and the supreme, eternal abode of *Bhagavān*.

*iti te jñānam ākhyātam guhyād guhyataram mayā |  
vimṛśyāitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru ||18.63||*

In this way, the most secret and the most confidential of all confidential knowledges has been spoken to you by Me. Now, properly reflect on this most secret knowledge in its entirety, and then do as you wish.

Now, in the two verses that follow, for Arjuna's benefit (and through Arjuna also for the benefit of all the devotees), He speaks the subject matter that is superior to everything.

*sarva-guhyatamam bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ |  
iṣṭo'si me dr̥ḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam ||18.64||  
man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru |  
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo'si me ||18.65||*

Now, listen again to My supreme statement that is MOST confidential and superior to everything. You are very much dear to Me, so for your well-being, I am telling this once more to you.

Fix your mind on Me, i.e. being My devotee keep thinking of Me; become My devotee, worship Me and pay your obeisances to Me. By this you will attain Me alone. Solemnly do I promise this to you, because you are dear to Me. [*Bhagavān* is asking Arjuna to become *eka-niṣṭha*, i.e. to have faith only in Him.]

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja |  
ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||18.66||*

Completely giving up all dharmas, take shelter of Me and Me alone. I will liberate you from all past, present and future sins, therefore do not grieve.

[The term ‘sarva’ here does not have a sense of ‘totality’. If *sarva-dharma* is taken as all *dharmas*, only *adharmas* will be left. *Bhagavān*’s intention is that one should give up all *sakāma* and *niṣkāma* karmas.]

***bhaktiā tv ananyayā śakya aham evaṁ-vidho’rjuna |  
jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa ||11.54||***

But verily by *ananya-bhakti* (*bhakti* having no other goal than *bhakti* itself), O Arjuna, can I in this form truly be known, seen and entered into (into my inherent form of *Brahman*), O scorcher of foes.

***mat-karma-kṛn mat-paramo mad-bhaktāḥ saṅga-varjitāḥ |  
nirvairāḥ sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava ||11.55||***

O Pāṇḍava! That person who works only for Me, who has Me as his highest aim, who is My devotee, is devoid of association that is averse to Me and is without a feeling of enmity towards every creature, attains Me. [Just because it is said that one must not have a feeling of enmity does not mean that one acts like a simpleton accepting everything on face value not caring about propriety in dealings. Such tendency could eventually destroy dharma rather than protect it. One must be able to distinguish a flower from a thorn, so that when collecting flowers, one does not get hurt by the thorn. Dutifulness (*kartavya-parāyanatā*) and prudence (*nīti*) are essential even as one recognises the presence of *Bhagavān* and the *cetana-tattva* (conscious principle) in every being.]

***yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā |  
tat tad evāvagaccha tvam mama tejo’ṁśa-sambhavam ||10.41||***

Whatever objects that have *vibhūti* (power), beauty, prosperity and extraordinary might, majesty etc, know that all of them have been produced from a portion of My splendour. [Such *vibhūti* gets manifest in a person due to his or her past pious activities.]

***aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate |  
iti matvā bhajānte mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ ||10.8||  
mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā bodhayantaḥ paraspam |  
kathayantaś ca mām nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca ||10.9||  
teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam |  
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te ||10.10||  
teṣāṁ evānukampārtham aham ajñāna-jam tamaḥ |  
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā ||10.11||***

I am the cause of creation of all objects, both material and non-material. It is because of Me that everyone gets engaged in various kinds of activities. Having such conviction, intelligent people render devotional service to Me with *bhāva*, i.e. with *mamatva*. [*Mamatva* is the feeling of being one in heart with someone resulting in being intent upon his pleasure or those related to him unmindful of personal pleasures and pains that may be experienced whatever

may be the reason. Other synonyms for this word are *prīti*, *ātmīyatā* etc. As an example, a material person has *mamatva* to his own self that he identifies as his body.]

Those whose minds are greedy for My name, qualities, pastimes, *sevā* etc and who are incapable of holding on to their life airs without Me, get complete satisfaction and bliss while always presenting knowledge on My matters to one another and glorifying My activities, qualities etc.

Those who are continually and perpetually in eager expectation of union with Me and render devotional service unto Me with love, I give them that *buddhi-yoga* (*mamatva*) through which they can attain Me (i.e., eternal union with Me).

It is for bestowing My grace on them (devotees) that I, who am situated in their *antaḥkaraṇa*, personally destroy the darkness born in them of ignorance through the intensely shining lamp of knowledge.\* [Though these verses and other verses that speak of *bhakti* appear to indicate a cause and effect relationship similar to other spiritual processes, it is actually not so because *bhakti*, being the *antarāṅgā-śakti* of *Bhagavān* is causeless just as *Bhagavān* is. *Bhakti*, in the form of *mamatva*, arises only due to the grace of *Bhagavān* or His devotee. Initially, *Bhagavān* mentions the nature of the devotees with *mamatva* and later explains that He only grants them the *mamatva*, because of His mercy.]

**\*śrīmad-gītā sarva-sāra-bhūtā bhūtāpatāpa-hṛt |  
catuḥ-ślokiyam ākhyātā khyātā sarva-niśarma-kṛt ||**

The previously mentioned four verses are famous as the essence of the entire Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā. They extinguish afflictions of all beings in their totality, and bestow all kinds of auspiciousness on everyone. (Śrī-Sārārtha-Varṣiṇī-Ṭikā)

**vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana |  
bahu-śākhā hy anantās ca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām ||2.41||**

“O dear one of the Kurus! In the path of *bhakti*, *vyavasāyātmika-buddhi*, or intelligence with absolute conviction, is just one (undividedly resolute). But the intelligence of others who are devoid of such conviction is boundless and multi-branched.”

The Commentary on the portion “*vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana*” written by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhakkura – “That intelligence which is centred on *bhakti-yoga* is superior when compared to all other kinds of intelligence. This is what is being said through the verse starting with *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhiḥ*... In this *bhakti-yoga*, the *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhi* (intelligence with absolute conviction) is just one (undividedly resolute). Glorification and remembrance of *Bhagavān*, physical service to His lotus feet and other activities instructed by my *Śrī Guru* are my only *sādhana* (practice to attain a goal), they alone are my *sādhya* (goal of the practice) and this alone constitutes my life. I am incapable of renouncing them in both states of *sādhana* and *sādhya*. This alone is my desire and this alone is my activity. Leaving these, I have no other activity or desire even in my dreams. Whether I have to face happiness or misery because of this, whether my bondage to material existence is destroyed or not – I am not affected by it in any way. This sort of *niscayātmikā-*



*buddhi* is possible only in *niṣkapaṭa-bhakti* (*uttamā-bhakti* that is also called *suddha-bhakti* which is totally free from deceit)”).

***nehābhikrama-nāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate |***  
***svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt ||2.40||***

The *bhakti-yoga* characterized by *śravaṇa* (hearing about *Bhagavān*), *kīrtana* etc, even if just begun, can neither be annihilated nor diminished. When beginning this *dharma*, even if only a little of it has been observed properly, that still frees one from the greatest fear; in other words, frees one from the bondage of this mundane existence.

***sarva-bhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām |***  
***kalpa-kṣaye punas tāni kalpādaḥ viśrjāmy aham ||9.7||***  
***prakṛtiṁ svām avaṣṭabhya viśrjāmi punaḥ punaḥ |***  
***bhūta-grāmam imaṁ kṛtsnam avaśaṁ prakṛter vaśāt ||9.8||***  
***na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya |***  
***udāsīnavad āsīnam asaktaṁ teṣu karmasu ||9.9||***  
***mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-carācaram |***  
***hetunānena kaunteya jagad viparivartate ||9.10||***

O son of Kuntī! At the end of a *kalpa*, i. e. at the time of dissolution, all beings merge into My *māyā-sakti* made of the three *guṇas*, and at the beginning of a *kalpa* I once again create them.

Presiding over My *prakṛti* made of the three *guṇas*, as per their respective *karma*, I create again and again the entire aggregate of all living beings who are subject to their *karma* due to their nature.

O Dhanamjaya! The activities such as creation, maintenance and destruction do not bind Me Who am without any attachment to them, remaining like one indifferent.

O son of Kuntī! Under My supervision, the *prakṛti* made of the three *guṇas* gives birth to all the universes along with the mobile and immobile beings. It is due to the same cause that this universe is produced again and again.

***avajānanti mām mūdhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam |***  
***param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūta-maheśvaram ||9.11||***

Without knowing My supreme reality that has assumed a human form, indiscriminative people disrespect Me, Kṛṣṇa, Who am the great Lord of all beings.

***mahātmānas tu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ |***  
***bhajānty ananya-manaso jñātvā bhūtādīm avyayam ||9.13||***

But the great souls, O Pārtha! who have attained the divine nature know that I, Kṛṣṇa in the human form, am the original cause of all beings, and that I am indestructible due to My form



being *sat-cit-ānanda* [eternity, knowledge and bliss]. Thus they render devotional service unto Me with their mind having no other intention but to serve Me.

*satatam kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ |*  
*namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā nitya-yuktā upāsate ||9.14||*

Those devotees of very firm conviction, continually performing *kīrtan* of My name, qualities or pastimes, making an effort to follow practices such as *sādhū-saṅga*, and devotedly paying obeisances for the purpose of attaining My *bhakti*, always worship Me with the eager desire to achieve union with Me.

*jñāna-yajñena cāpy anye yajanto mām upāsate |*  
*ekatvena prthaktvena bahudhā viśvato-mukham ||9.15||*

There are some others (excluding the *mahātma-ananya-bhaktas* and the four kinds mentioned in chapter 7– the distressed, aspirants after knowledge, seekers of wealth and men of knowledge) who worship Me by performing three kinds of knowledge-sacrifice, viz. *ahamgrahopāsana* [thinking themselves as *Bhagavān*], *pratīkopāsana* [taking any one *vibhūti* of *Bhagavān* as *Bhagavān* and worshipping it] and many kinds of *viśva-rūpopāsana* [taking the totality of *vibhūtis* as *Bhagavān*.] [While in *bhakti* the deity is worshipped exactly as *Bhagavān*, in *pratīkopāsana*, the deity is considered only as a symbol of *Bhagavān* and not *Bhagavān* Himself. Such worshippers are opposites of the *mahātmās* mentioned in verses 9.13.]

What is the reason for so many different forms of worship? To answer that, *Bhagavān* has described His universal form in this way:

*aham kratuṛ aham yajñaḥ svadhāham aham auśadham |*  
*mantrō'ham aham evājyāṃ aham agnir aham hutam ||9.16||*  
*pitāham asya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ |*  
*vedyāṃ pavitraṃ omkāra ṛk sāmā yajur eva ca ||9.17||*  
*gatir bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṃ suhṛt |*  
*prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṃ nidhānaṃ bījaṃ avyayaṃ ||9.18||*  
*tapāmy aham aham varṣaṃ nigrhṇāmy utsrjāmi ca |*  
*amṛtaṃ caiva mṛtyuś ca sad asac cāham arjuna ||9.19||*

I am the *yajñas* like the *agniṣṭoma* and *vaiśvadeva*, I am sacrificial offering to ancestors, I am the medicinal herbs, I am the *mantra*, I am the *ghee*, I am the fire and I am actually the act of offering an oblation with fire.

I am the father of this world, its mother, its sustainer and its grandfather. I am the pure sacred *Omkāra* that is fit to be known, as well as the *R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Yajurveda*.

I am the destination, the one who supports and nourishes, the Lord, the witness of auspicious and inauspicious activities, the refuge of everyone, the one who drives away all adversities, absolute benefactor, the act of creation, destruction and sustenance, the various wealths like *Padma*, *Śaṅkha* etc, and I am also the indestructible cause of everything.

O Arjuna! It is I Who during the summer season gives heat in the form of the sun, and in the monsoon season, in the form of a cloud, let loose the rain. Sometimes, as an obstructor to rain, I hold it back. I indeed am *amṛta* (liberation) and *mṛtyu* (transmigratory existence), and I am also *sat-asat* (gross and subtle). [*Bhagavān* is addressing people's faith in multiple existences/activities and by showing that He is the basis of all such existences and activities, He wants to bring their faith unto one existence/one truth.]

*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate |*  
*teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham ||9.22||*

Those one-pointed devotees (*ananya-bhaktas* who have no other goal but devotional service itself) who continually think about Me, and serve and adore Me, such persons who eternally think of Me – I personally take care of their union with Me and make sure they never leave Me, i.e. they never fall down. [Humans have an innate ability to endeavour. This ability is provided by *Bhagavān* and is called as *pauruṣa*. Through such endeavour, humans can maintain themselves. One's material happiness and distress are determined by *karma* and one must utilize his *pauruṣa* to work towards one's future. Here, by saying 'yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham', *Bhagavān* is conveying that for those devotees who don't have *śraddhā*, He grants it to them and for those who have *śraddhā*, He preserves it. The *śraddhā* here is *sāstrīya-śraddhā*.]

*ye'py anya-devatā-bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |*  
*te'pi mām eva kaunteya yajanty avidhi-pūrvakam ||9.23||*

O son of Kuntī! Those devotees of other *devatās* who perform worship with *śraddhā*, are also worshipping Me only, but in the wrong manner, i.e. devoid of the injunctions that guide one to attain Me. [The *śraddhā* here is *laukika śraddhā*]

*aham hi sarva-yajñānāṁ bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca |*  
*na tu mām abhijānanti tattvenātaś cyavanti te ||9.24||*

This is because I alone am the enjoyer and Lord of all *yajñas*. However, they do not know Me in truth, for which reason they fall down. In other words, they attain rebirth in this *saṁsāra*. [People create various methods of worshipping according to their *śraddhā* in the three modes and inculcate similar *śraddhā* in others also in such methods. However, *Bhagavān* is only one, not many and the means to achieve Him is also only one, which is *bhakti*, His own *svarūpa-śakti*.]

*yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ |*  
*bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti mad-yājino'pi mām ||9.25||*

Those who worship the *devatās* attain the *devatās*, those who worship the ancestors attain the ancestors, those who worship the spirits attain the spirits and those devotees who worship Me attain only Me. [*Bhagavān* talks about the *laukika-śraddhā* of various kinds of people and settles their destination according to their *śraddhā*. People approach *Bhagavān* since they

consider themselves incomplete. However, when they approach Him, they do so in accordance with their *śraddhā* and not in the way He recommends. The first three happen through *śraddhā* in the material modes and the final is through *sāstrīya-śraddhā*.]

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati |*  
*tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtaṁ aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ ||9.26||*

He who offers Me with devotion, items such as a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept such objects offered with devotion by a devotee who is internally pure (with a pure *antaḥ-karaṇa*). [The term “*bhaktyā*” implies that Lord accepts the devotee’s offering only through devotion. *Bhakti* is *ānukūlya* towards *Bhagavān* and it means accepting and following His instructions without duplicity. It is also the first step towards *Bhagavān*.]

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat |*  
*yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam ||9.27||*

O son of Kuntī! Whatever activities you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you do, whatever you give in charity and whatever austerities you perform, offer them all to Me. [This is an initial instruction to one who does not want to let go his *ahamtā* or “I”ness and therefore has not surrendered himself. Hence *Bhagavān* asks him to surrender the activity.]

*śubhāśubha-phalair evaṁ mokṣyase karma-bandhanaiḥ |*  
*samnyāsa-yoga-yuktātmā vimukto mām upaiśyasi ||9.28||*

By doing so, you will get freed from the bondage of *karma* produced by auspicious and inauspicious fruits of your actions, and endowed with the *yoga* of renouncing the fruits of actions you will become special even amongst the liberated people, attaining proximity to Me for the purpose of serving Me.

*samo’haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu na me dveṣyo’sti na priyaḥ |*  
*ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpy ahaṁ ||9.29||*

I have a feeling of equanimity towards all the beings. There is no one disliked by Me or dear to me. But those who render service to Me with *bhakti* – I have the same attachment to them as they have to Me. [There is equanimity in the way *Bhagavān* sees the *cetana-tattva* (conscious principle) in everyone and in His *mamatva* towards them. Therefore, there is no partiality on the part of *Bhagavān* towards anyone. However, as the devotees adhere to *Bhagavān*’s instructions, He states His dearness to them. Even in mundane dealings it is seen that the engagement with an adherent to one’s instructions, whoever he may be, is different from the engagement with a non-adherent.]

*api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk |*  
*sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ ||9.30||*

Even if a person of extremely detestable conduct serves Me with *ananya-bhāva* (with no other intention but to serve Me), then he is fit to be considered a *sādhur* (saintly person) only,

for he has his intelligence firmly fixed on my *aikāntikī-bhakti* (devotional service having no goal other than devotional service itself).

Here, “extremely detestable conduct” and “exclusive devotion” are mutually contradictory. The human body is made of the five gross elements and is liable to destruction. The mind too is *anna-maya* (completely nourished by food that has its origins in the material nature).

*Paradhana* (coveting another’s wealth), *paradhāra* (coveting another’s wife), *dveṣa* (hatred), *mātsarya* (envy), *himsā* (violent mentality), *kapaṭatā* (crookedness – intentions do not match with what is spoken and what is done), *anṛta* (falsehood), thievery and repeatedly mentioning about another person’s faults are all *sudurācāra* (extremely detestable conduct). The living being is *svārthī* (selfish), *kalahapriyā* (ready to quarrel at every occasion) and *lobhī* (greedy). Hence it follows that detestable conduct and exclusive devotion are impossible to occur together. Therefore, by showing what is impossible as possible, it is mentioned – “Even if a person of extremely detestable conduct serves Me with *ananya-bhāva*... etc”. [This is shown by the use of two indeclinables ‘*api*’ (also) and ‘*cet*’ (if) which, when used together, indicate a possibility.]

In reality, in the midst of the innumerable *śaktis* (ability to accomplish actions) of the Supreme Lord, *bahirāṅgā* (external) and *antarāṅgā* (internal) *śaktis* are main. Through *bahirāṅgā-śakti*, the Supreme Lord creates the *ekapāda-vibhūti* (material world) and through *antarāṅgā-śakti*, He governs the *tripāda-vibhūti* (spiritual world).

*Bahirāṅgā-śakti* is made of the three *guṇas*, i.e. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and they mix with each other mutually and that is, none of them exists without the other two as they are always mixed. *Antarāṅgā-śakti* is *hlādinī*, *sarvīt* and *sandhinī*. They are not mutually mixed. Each of them is complete and independent. *Bhakti* is the essence of *hlādinī* and of *sarvīt* (they are not mixed but occur together).

This *śakti* of the Supreme Lord called as *bhakti* is *śāstrīya* (essence of the scriptures). The meaning of the word ‘*bhakti*’ is *bhajana*, *sevā*, *paricaryā* etc. all of which refer to serving through one’s body, mind and speech devoid of any sort of selfish motive.

*bhaktir asya bhajanam tad-ihāmutropādhi-nairāsyenāmuṣmin manah-kalpanam etad eva naiṣkarmyam* | [gopāla.tāpaṇi.upaniṣad. 1.14]

Rendering service to *Bhagavān* with the sole intention of pleasing Him is called *bhakti*. Leaving aside the desire to gain objects of this world (material world) or the other world (spiritual world) and settling the mind completely in service to *Bhagavān* is actually *bhakti*.

The meaning of the word *śāstra* is *anuśāsana* (discipline) and *hitopadeśa* (beneficial advice).

*saṁniyamendriya-grāmaṁ sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ |  
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ* ||12.4||

Bringing all the senses under control and keeping *bhagavad-buddhi* everywhere, being intent on the well-being of all living entities, they certainly attain Me.



*yaḥ sāstra-vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāma-kārataḥ |  
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim || 16.23 ||*

The person who, disregarding the injunctions of *sāstra*, acts independently as directed by his mind, attains neither perfection, i.e. does not reach *Bhagavān*, nor happiness nor the supreme destination.

*tasmāc chāstraṁ pramāṇam te kār्याkār्या-vyavasthitau |  
jñātvā sāstra-vidhānoktaṁ karma kartum ihārhasi || 16.24 ||*

Therefore, when ascertaining what is to be done and what is not to be done, *sāstra* alone is the authority (*pramāṇa*) for you. Knowing the action that is to be done as prescribed in *sāstra*, (you will) become qualified to perform that action (thus) established.

*na hyetadadbhūtā vyādha tavāhimsādayo guṇāḥ |  
hari-bhaktau pravṛttā ye na te syuḥ para-tāpinaḥ ||*

O hunter! The presence of qualities such as *ahimsā* in you is not astonishing at all, because those persons who become engaged in performing Hari-*bhakti* do not cause pain to others.

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā  
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ |  
harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā  
manorathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.12]*

The *devatās*, along with all the saintly qualities, reside in the heart of him who has *akiñcanā bhakti* (*bhakti* where the goal is *bhakti* itself) for *Bhagavān*. But, wherefrom can such qualities of the great personalities ever occur in one who is not a devotee of Hari? Such a person only keeps running towards trifling external matters as a result of his many different desires.

It is described in the 17th *śataka* (canto) of the work Śrī-Vṛndāvana-Mahimāmṛtam written by Śrīla Prabhodhānanda Sarasvatī as follows—

*paradhana-paradāra-dveṣa-mātsarya-himsā  
anṛta-kapaṭa-caurya-parābhidyāyān |  
tyajati iha bhakti rādhikāprāṇanāthe  
na khalu bhavati tasyā bandhyā vṛndāvaneśā ||*

That devotee who, while residing in Vṛndāvana gives up *paradhana* (coveting another's wealth), *paradhāra* (coveting another's wife), *dveṣa* (hatred), *mātsarya* (envy), *himsā* (violent mentality), *kapaṭatā* (crookedness), *anṛta* (falsehood), thievery and doing bad things to others, for him, staying in Vṛndāvana becomes fruitful. In other words, he then really gets to reside in Vṛndāvana. The *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes accomplished for him.



Man is a social being created by the Supreme Lord. For the fulfilment of his necessities, man constructs the society. The society has its own customs, institutions, traditions, norms and opinions through which the society is kept running. The only things that are meditated upon by the human society are *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (material desire, lust). Through *artha*, all mundane dealings get accomplished and from *kāma*, human body gets produced and one also gets entertainment.

The meaning of the word *śraddhā* is *niścaya* (conviction). *Śraddhā* has got three components namely *atrpti* (insatiability), *sukhānubhūti* (experience of happiness) and *ākāṅkṣa* (non-termination of the flow of knowledge). The *niścaya* (conviction) comes about by seeing, hearing and experiencing. The *śraddhā* towards *artha* and *kāma* occurs in this manner only. This is called *laukika-śraddhā*. When *śraddhā* towards the unseen *Parameśvara*, *bhakti* etc, occurs in this manner, then this *śraddhā* is still called *laukika-śraddhā*.

Objects are of two types – *laukika* (customary, material) and *pāralaukika* (beyond this world, spiritual). *Śraddhā* towards *laukika* objects occurs through the mundane dealings. *Śraddhā* towards *pāralaukika* objects occurs only in accordance with the *śabda-śāstras* (scriptures). Phenomena such as *bhakti* or the Supreme Lord are described in the *śabda-śāstras* (scriptures).

The mental disposition essential for the perception of an object comprises of *atrpti* (insatiability), *sukhānubhūti* (experience of happiness) and *ākāṅkṣa* (non-termination of the flow of knowledge). In spite of these dispositions being similar for both *laukika* (customary, material) and *pāralaukika* (beyond this world, spiritual) objects, they originate from different sources. The ability to comprehend and engage with *laukika* objects originates from *svārtha* (selfishness). Those having such temperament are not inclined to follow *anuśāsana* (discipline for following the instructions of God). The ability to comprehend and engage with *pāralaukika* objects originates only from *parārtha* (inclination to serve another's interest). Those with this temperament inherently have both *anuśāsana* (discipline) and *hitopadeśa* (beneficial advice) in their nature *i.e.*, they have a *sāstriya* temperament.

For *laukika* objects, only *laukika-śraddhā* is agreeable. However, even if one is impelled towards *pāramārthika* (spiritual) phenomena by *laukika-śraddhā*, there is an extreme necessity of *sāstriya-śraddhā*.

*Laukika-śraddhā* is plagued with faults, while *sāstriya-śraddhā* is faultless. It is extremely necessary in the path of *bhakti* for *sāstriya-śraddhā* to occur after *laukika-śraddhā*.

*tri-vidhaṁ narakasyedaṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanah |*  
*kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet || 16.21 ||*  
*etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamo-dvārais tribhir naraḥ |*  
*ācarat ātmanah śreyas tato yāti parām gatim || 16.22 ||*

Lust, anger and greed are three gateways to hell which destroys the self, that is to say, which degrades the *jīva*. Therefore these three are to be given up.

O son of Kuntī! That person who is freed from these three gateways to hell conducts himself in a manner that is beneficial to him, and thus obtains the most excellent destination.

With regard to *śraddhā*, the conversation in Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gīta proceeds in this manner –

*arjuna uvāca*  
*ye sāstra-vidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |*  
*teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvam āho rajas tamah ||17.1||*

Arjuna asked: O Kṛṣṇa! What is the status of those persons who give up the injunctions of *sāstra* and with *laukika-śraddhā* perform activities like *yajña*? Is it in *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*?

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*tri-vidhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sā svabhāvajā |*  
*sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu ||17.2||*

Śrī Bhagavān said:

Threefold is that *śraddhā* born of the nature of embodied beings, *i.e.* *śraddhā* which is produced out of their previous *saṁskāras* (impressions): *sāttvik*, *rājasik* and *tāmasik*. Hear about them.

*sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata |*  
*śraddhāmāyo'yaṁ puruṣo yo yac-chraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ||17.3||*

O Bhārata! Everyone's *śraddhā* corresponds to their nature, *i.e.*, to his *antaḥkaraṇa* [internal sense organ which guides a person's thinking, feeling and willing and is a combination of mind, intelligence, *ahamkāra* and *citta* where each has a different function]. The person is made of his particular *śraddhā*, thus whatever being or object he reposes his *śraddhā* on, say for example a *devata*, his *antaḥkarana* too will be just like that *devata* or object.

The essence of everything is as follows: if a person who has *laukika-śraddhā* (which is the cause of *sudurācāra*) attains *sāstrīya-śraddhā* (which is the cause of *ananya-bhajana*) through the mercy of Śrī Guru and Bhagavān that is causeless, then only must such a person be considered saintly. Only his intelligence is steady. [*Laukika-śraddhā* is based on *bahiraṅgā-śakti* and is like darkness while *sāstrīya-śraddhā* is due to *antaraṅgā-śakti* and is like sun-light. They both cannot occur together. When the sun rises, darkness leaves.]

*kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati |*  
*kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati ||9.31||*

He quickly becomes a righteous person dedicated to *dharma* and attains the ever-present peace. O son of Kuntī! Declare that My devotee never perishes.

*kiṁ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas tathā |*  
*anityam asukhaṁ lokam imāṁ prāpya bhajasva mām ||9.33||*

Thus there can be no doubt that pious *brāhmaṇas* and royal sages, by becoming My devotees, attain the supreme destination. This means that all these devotees undoubtedly reach Me, the Supreme destination. Therefore, O Arjuna! Having attained this world of impermanence and distress, perform service to Me. [*Bhagavān* points out here that *bhakti* unto Him is applicable to all humanity irrespective of their background. Even if the learned, rich and powerful think they have all happiness because of their learning and wealth, they have to perform *bhajana* to Him if they want to attain eternal happiness.]

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru |*  
*mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam ātmānam mat-parāyaṇaḥ ||9.34||*

Become one whose mind is in Me, that is to say, being My devotee keep thinking of Me; become My devotee; worship Me; and pay your obeisances to Me. By uniting thus your mind and body in my sevā and becoming fully intent upon Me, you will attain only Me. [By saying *man-manā*, *Bhagavān* rules out *sakāma* and *niṣkāma-bhakti* since he wants to highlight *ānukūlya bhajana* in this verse.]

*bhūmir āpo'nalo vāyuh khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca |*  
*aḥmākāra itiyam me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā ||7.4||*  
*apareyam itas tv anyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām |*  
*jīva-bhūtām mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat ||7.5||*

My material nature (*jaḍā-prakṛti*) is divided into eight parts, viz., earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intelligence and sense of doership.

But superior to this lower (material) *prakṛti*, O mighty-armed one, there is another *prakṛti* of Mine having the nature of the *jīva* by whom this universe is maintained.

[One first gets the knowledge of the material nature and then the knowledge of the spiritual nature.]

*etad-yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇīty upadhāraya |*  
*aḥmā kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā ||7.6||*

Understand in this way that all beings, whether mobile or immobile, have both these lower and higher *prakṛtis* for their origin; similarly, I am the root cause of the production and destruction of the entire universe.

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat kimcid asti dhanamjaya |*  
*mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva ||7.7||*

O Dhanañjaya! There is nothing else superior to Me. This entire universe is strung on Me like pearls on a thread.

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā |*  
*mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te ||7.14||*

My *māyā* which bewilders the jēvas through happiness derived from matter and which is made of the three *guṇas* is very difficult to pass beyond. However, those who take shelter of Me and Me alone cross over this *māyā*.

*na mām duṣkṛtino mūdhaḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ |*  
*māyayāpahṛta-jñānā āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ ||7.15||*

The performers of impure actions, namely, gross fools (*mūdha*), lowest of men (*narādhamā*), whose knowledge has been usurped by *māyā* (*māyayāpahṛta-jñānā*) and those with *āsuric* mentalities – all these do not accept My shelter.

1) Those who give up the engagements in relation to *Bhagavān* and get involved in impious engagements are *mūdha*.

2) After performing *bhakti* for some time, those who give up *bhakti* thinking that *sādhana-bhakti* has no use in obtaining the fruit are *narādhamā*.

3) Even after hearing the scriptures, those who think that eternal *bhakti* can be attained only to Śrī Nārāyaṇa who is splendidly present in *Vaikuṇṭha* and not to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa because These are humans and are called *māyayāpahṛtajñānā*; in other words, their knowledge has been usurped by *māyā*. [Human tendency born out of the upbringing since childhood is to consider inferiority and superiority in any object that is dealt with. This same material tendency gets extended even to the consideration of *Bhagavān* and therefore, one form of *Bhagavān* is considered as inferior or superior to another form of *Bhagavān*. Just as there is no point in considering one finger to be longer or shorter than the other when all fingers are part of the same hand, it is not correct to consider inferiority and superiority between forms of the same Single Truth.]

4) Just as *asuras* like Jarāsandha attack My divine form with arrows, in the same way, those who, through sophistry and fallacious arguments, refute the existence of My form that is splendidly present in Śrī *Vaikuṇṭha* as also My deity form and do not come under My shelter are those having *āsuric* mentalities.

*[sannikarṣo'tra martyānām anādarāṇa-kāraṇam |*  
*gāṅgaṁ hitvā yathānyāmbhas tatrato yāti suddhaye || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.84.31]*

Amongst humans, proximity is the cause for disregard, just as one who lives near the river *Gāṅgā* would travel to some other river for purifying himself.

Due to familiarity, hardly any one accepted Kṛṣṇa as He is, even on occasions where He displayed His divine powers. Only the residents of *Vraja* accepted Him as He is, due to their *mamatva*.]

*bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate |*  
*vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ||7.19||*



That *jñānī-bhakta* who has the experience that “verily Vāsudeva is everything”, attains My shelter in the birth that comes at the end of his innumerable births through the chance association of My *suddha-bhakta* (pure-devotee). Such a great person is extremely rare. [The *jñāna* here is the knowledge of difference between matter and consciousness. Even this knowledge comes only by *Bhagavān*’s grace; otherwise one considers the body which is matter to be the *cetana-tattva* (conscious principle). The *jñāna* mentioned in the verse is not knowledge about Kṛṣṇa or *bhakti*.

*muktānām api siddhānām nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇaḥ |*  
*sudurlabhaḥ praśāntātmā koṭiṣv api mahāmune || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.14.5]*

O great sage, among crores of liberated and perfected beings, one may be a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa. Such devotees, who are fully peaceful, are extremely rare.

Knowledge about Kṛṣṇa or *bhakti* comes only by *sāstrīya-śraddhā*. See verse 4.39]

*yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ janānām puṇya-karmaṇām |*  
*te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ || 7.28 ||*

Those performers of pious activities whose sins have mostly been destroyed get freed from the delusion of dualities in the form of like and dislike, happiness and misery etc because of a chance association with a *sādhu* and serve Me with firm conviction. [Happiness, misery, sins etc are explained in the following way. “*anukūla vedanīyam sukham pratikūla vedanīyam duḥkham*” – Know *anukūla* to oneself to be happiness and *pratikūla* to oneself to be misery. Disregarding orders entails sin. *Dharma* is following the orders of *Bhagavān*. The sins of one who follows *Bhagavān*’s orders get destroyed when he starts following His orders.]

*jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye |*  
*te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam || 7.29 ||*

Those who strive for freedom from old age and death, having taken shelter of Me, know the renowned *Brahman*, *jīvātmā* and also all *karmas* (the bondage to mundane existence born out of various activities of the *jīvātmā*) because of the influence of My *bhakti*. [This talks about *sakāma-bhaktas* who seek freedom from old age and death.]

*sādhībhūtādhidaivam mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ |*  
*prayāṇa-kāle’pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasah || 7.30 ||*

Those who know Me along with *adhibhūta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajña* due to the influence of *sat-saṅga*, and whose mind is completely attached to Me, know Me along with *adhibhūta* etc even at the time of death. In other words, even at the time of leaving their body, they remember Me. [Here *Bhagavān* says how easy it is to remember Him. *Adhibhūta* refers to inert matter; *adhidaiva* refers to the *virāt-puruṣa* or the form of *Bhagavān* comprising of the entire creation as His body; *adhiyajña* is *Bhagavān* as the *antaryāmi* or indweller who impels everyone into activities like sacrifices.]



*anta-kāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram |  
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṁ yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ ||8.5||*

He who at the time of death, while remembering Me, gives up his body and starts his journey, attains My nature – there is no doubt at all about this. [The mind cannot focus on more than one object at the same time. Since one's mind is generally occupied with material matters all through one's life, the time close to death is an opportunity to focus on *Bhagavān*. This verse applies only to those who intend to focus their minds on *Bhagavān* during the last moments.]

*yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram |  
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitāḥ ||8.6||*

Whatever object one thinks of at the time of death while leaving his body, one attains, O son of Kuntī, that very object, because he always remains imbued with its thought.

*tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca |  
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir mām evaiśyasy asaṁśayaḥ ||8.7||*

Therefore, remembering Me during all times continually, fight as well. Being endowed with a determined mind and resolute intelligence, both thus surrendered to Me, you will undoubtedly come to Me.

*abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena cetasā nānya-gāminā |  
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ yāti pārthānucintayan ||8.8||*

O Pārtha! A person thinking of Me continually with a mind which does not go towards anything else, practising repetitive remembrance of Me, reaches the supremely divine Person that is Me. [This verse talks about *anukūlatā* towards *Bhagavān*.]

*sarva-dvārāṇi saṁyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca |  
mūrdhny ādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yoga-dhāraṇām ||8.12||  
om ity ekākṣaram brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran |  
yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramām gatim ||8.13||*

Withdrawing all the openings in the body, such as the eyes, from their external objects, confining the mind in the heart, i.e. giving up desire for other objects, and settling the life air in-between the eyebrows, being fixed in concentration on Me, i.e. taking shelter of meditation on My form, that person who, while uttering ॐ, the mono-syllable form of *Brahman* and thinking of Me Who am expressed by It, gives up his body and departs, such a person attains the highest destination. That is to say, he attains My *sālokya* (residence in the same place as Mine). [This verse talks about those who accept the process of *yoga* in accordance with their *śraddhā* and of the necessity of *bhakti* even for them.]

*ananya-cetāḥ satataṁ yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ |  
tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nitya-yuktasya yoginaḥ ||8.14||*

O Pārtha! One who is *ananya-citta*, viz., is devoid of the tendency of having any desire other than doing devotional service to Me, and remembers Me uninterruptedly every day – by such a performer of *bhakti-yoga* who is perpetually and eagerly desiring union with Me, I am very easily attainable. [This verse talks about the secondary characteristics of *uttamā-bhakti*, viz., *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*.]

***mām upetya punar-janma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam |  
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhim paramām gatāḥ ||8.15||***

On attaining Me, the *mahātmās* (great persons) obtain no more rebirth, which is the abode of misery and non-eternality. This is because they have reached the supreme perfection, i.e. they have become My associates in My eternal pastimes.

***ā brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar-āvartino'rjuna |  
mām upetya tu kaunteya punar-janma na vidyate ||8.16||***

O Arjuna! Right up to *Brahmaloka*, every world is a place of return, but on reaching Me, there is no rebirth, O son of Kuntī.

***vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva  
dāneṣu yat puṇya-phalaṁ pradiṣṭam |  
atyeti tat sarvaṁ idam viditvā  
yogī param sthānam upaiti cādyam ||8.28||***

By knowing these *tattvas* (true nature of real principles) which have been said by Me (the glories of Me and My devotees, as described in 7th and 8th chapter), My devotee *yogī* transcends whatever pious fruits have been mentioned in the Vedas, in *yajñas*, in austerities and in offering of gifts etc, and reaches My supreme abode. [This verse reconciles verse 18.66. Both verses talk about one who has given up both *sakāma* and *niṣkāma karma*.]

***nātyaśnatas tu yogo'sti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ |  
na cātisvapna-śilasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna ||6.16||***

O Arjuna! This *yoga* does not become perfected for him who eats excessively or who does not eat at all, or for him who sleeps too much or who stays awake exceedingly. This means that the *yoga* of such people does not achieve perfection. [This verse shows how whimsical action is not beneficial.]

***yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu |  
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā ||6.17||***

The *yoga* of one who is regulated, viz., who eats and walks appropriately, who suitably applies efforts in actions, i.e. in talking and other dealings, both mundane and spiritual, and who sleeps and stays awake appropriately, destroys all miseries. [This verse indicates how one conducts himself in accordance with the desire of *Bhagavān* by following His instructions. Propriety is essential in all of one's dealings, be they material or spiritual.]

**sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānam sarva-bhūtāni cātmani |  
īkṣate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ ||6.29||**

One who is a *yoga-yuktātmā*, i.e. whose *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner organ) is of the same form as *Brahman* and who sees everywhere equally, sees the *Paramātmā* in every being and every being as situated in *Paramātmā*. [Here both *Paramātmā* and *Brahman* are synonyms of *Bhagavān* and are His various manifestations, such as being present everywhere without any distinction and also being present locally in the heart of every living being.]

**yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |  
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||6.30||**

The person who sees Me in every being and sees every being in Me does not lose sight of Me nor do I lose sight of that worshipper and *yogī* of Mine. That is to say, he never falls down.

[*khaṁ vāyum agniṁ salilāṁ mahīm ca  
jyotīṁśi bhūtāni diśo drumādīn |  
sarit-samudrāṁśi ca hareḥ śarīraṁ  
yat kiṁ ca bhūtaṁ praṇamed ananyaḥ || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.41]*

The devotee should pay his respects (bow before) to ether, fire, air, water, earth, the sun, moon and other luminaries, all living beings, the directions, trees and other plants, the rivers and oceans and whatever exists, seeing them as the body of Lord Hari and therefore not different from Him.

If one pays respects to everything, there is no scope of disrespect or disregard for any living being.]

**sarva-bhūta-sthitam yo mām bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ |  
sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ||6.31||**

That *yogī* who is in *ekatva* (is united with Me in a loving relationship), and serves Me Who am situated in all the beings, resides entirely only in Me, though engaged in all kinds of dealings. [One first sees *Bhagavān* everywhere (*paśyati*), then worships Him (*bhajati*), by being favourable to all living entities. Since he acts favourably in whatever action he does, he resides in *Bhagavān*.]

**ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna |  
sukhaṁ vā yadī vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ ||6.32||**

One who sees the happiness and misery in everyone similar to the way he sees them in himself – that *yogī*, O Arjuna, is the best. Such is My opinion. [This is an indication of *anukūlatā*, favourable tendency towards everyone. Such *anukūlatā* arises only due to *Bhagavān's antaraṅgā-śakti* and not through any effort on the part of the devotee.]

**samñyāsas tu mahā-bāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ |  
yoga-yukto munir brahma nacireṇādhigacchati ||5.6||**

But, O mighty-armed one (Arjuna), without *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, *saṁnyāsa* only results in pain. Therefore, by becoming a *jñānī*, the *niṣkāma-karma-yogī* reaches *Brahman* very quickly. [It is stressed by *Bhagavān* again and again that it is not possible for a human being to give up all activities, for man is dependent on others even for minimal subsistence.

*na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt* (3.5)

It is not possible for someone to be inactive even for a moment.

*na hi deha-bhṛtā śakyam tyaktuṁ karmāṇy aśeṣataḥ* (18.11)

It is not possible for one who is embodied to give up activities completely.]

*ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitam manah |*

*nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmani te sthitāḥ || 5.19 ||*

They whose mind is fixed in *sama-bhāva* (seeing *Bhagavān* everywhere and thus acting for everyone's well-being) have won over the mundane existence in this world itself, since they always remain fixed in *Brahman* itself, and *Brahman* does not see fault in anyone and is therefore impartial. [This verse shows that we can be liberated even when living in this world carrying out all the activities with the right tendency while maintaining propriety. One does not need to wait for his death to attain such a state, or carry out particular activities, or adopt a particular garb. This is *bhāgavata-dharma*. *Bhāgavata dharma* is that which is spoken by *Bhagavān* Himself and by following which, the result can be obtained by everyone in this world with ease, be he learned or ignorant. There is no exclusive eligibility.

*ye vai bhagavatā proktā upāyā hy ātma-labdhave |*

*añjaḥ puṁsāṁ aviduṣāṁ viddhi bhāgavatān hi tān || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.34]*

“That *dharma* which is spoken by *Bhagavān* Himself is the only means for obtaining *Bhagavān*. Know that *dharma* which is easy to perform by all humans, including those who are not intelligent, to be ‘*Bhāgavata-dharma*’.”

*Dharma* means principles for universal protection and sustenance. (*dhāraṇāt dharmam ity āhuḥ*) [Mahābhārata 12.109.11]

*dharmam tu sāksād bhagavat-praṇītam*

*na vai vidur ṛṣayo nāpi devāḥ |*

*na siddha-mukhyā asurā manuṣyāḥ*

*kutaś ca vidyādhara-cāraṇādayaḥ || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.19]*

“*Dharma* is that which is given directly by *Bhagavān*. Such *dharma* is not known to the sages, the *devas*, the chief of the *siddhas*, the *asuras*, the humans, what to speak of the *vidyādharas* or the *cāraṇas*.”

*sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ paśyed bhagavad-bhāvam ātmanah |*

*bhūtāni bhagavaty ātmany eṣa bhāgavatottamaḥ || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.02.45]*



The most advanced devotee (*uttama-bhakta*) is one who sees *Bhagavān* in every living being as the indweller and controller and therefore has *sama-bhāva* towards every living being. He also sees the *cetana-tattva* in every living being and sees them in *Bhagavān* Who is also a *cetana*, a conscious being, but Supreme to all. Since the *cetana-tattva* is the seat of *mamatva*, he sees every living being with *mamatva* as he sees *Bhagavān*.

Every individual protects everything in a manner favourable to one's nature. Maintaining equanimity in vision does not mean treating a dog and a gentleman in the same manner, but recognising the presence of *Bhagavān* in both and acting in a manner that is favourable to both while maintaining propriety. Here *Brahman* is another name for *Bhagavān*.]

*labhante brahma-nirvāṇam ṛṣayah kṣīṇa-kalmaṣāḥ |*  
*chinna-dvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ || 5.25 ||*

Those *tattva-draṣṭās* (seers of the truth) whose all sins have been destroyed, whose all doubts have been dispelled (having obtained *sāstrīya śraddhā*), who are devoted to the well-being of all living entities, and who control their minds, attain *Brahma-nirvāṇa*. [This verse is like a commentary to the previous verse, i.e. 5.19. There are only two instances in the Bhagavad-Gītā where *Bhagavān* talks about being *sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ*. This nature is present only in *Bhagavān* and His dear devotees and it can be obtained by humans when they get *mamatva* to them through *bhakti*, and not otherwise. Only one who is free from sins can attain *Brahma-nirvāṇa*. Sin entails disregarding instructions of *Bhagavān*. When all of one's doubts have been destroyed, one gets resolute conviction in scriptures which are *Bhagavān's* instructions and follows them with utmost regard, surrendering completely to *Guru*, who is *Bhagavān* Himself, in accordance with the scriptures.

*tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam |*  
*śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ brahmany upaśamāśrayam || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.21]*

Therefore, one who is really inquisitive about the topmost good must surrender to a *Guru* who is a *sāstrajñā* (an expert in scriptures and their purport), *anubhavī* (has directly experienced *Bhagavān*) and *ācaraṇa-parāyaṇa* (intent on right conduct as per the scriptures, being free from anger, greed etc.)

The reasons for giving the above three characteristics are, if the *Guru* is not an expert in scriptures, he will be unfit to remove the doubts from the disciple's heart and this could sometimes even lead to the disciple's *śraddhā* getting weakened.

*Bhakti* is always performed in accordance with the scriptures alone.

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pāñcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā |*  
*aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate || [Brahma-Yāmala]*

Without considering injunctions from *Śruti*, *Smṛti*, *Purāṇas*, *Pañcarātra* and other scriptures, one-pointed devotion to Hari only leads to a calamity to their devotion.



It is not possible to consider the injunctions unless one knows them thoroughly or shows sincerity in knowing about them thoroughly. Therefore, expertise in scriptures is essential for a *Guru* else, he cannot give *śikṣā* to the disciple nor remove his doubts scripturally.

In this matter, while one may be guided by the society or even by one's heart in a particular manner, one who is really interested in reaching *Bhagavān* and serving Him must take guidance only from the scriptures which are *Bhagavān*'s instructions, for, both the society and one's heart (*antaḥkaraṇa*) are imbued with *laukika-śraddhā* and *laukika-śraddhā* does not take one to *Bhagavān* who is a *śāstrīya-vastu* (object attained only from the scriptures).

*yādṛṣī yādṛṣī śraddhā siddhir bhavati tādṛṣī* || [Brahma.Samhita. 60]

Whatever is the nature of one's *śraddhā*, the perfection one will achieve will also be according to that *śraddhā*.

*Laukika-śraddhā* can utmost get one social recognition since; it originates from the society and is nourished by society, social opinions and social norms while *śāstrīya-śraddhā* leads one to *Bhagavān*.

Therefore, it is necessary that one who really wants to practice *Bhāgavata-dharma* must give up *laukika-śraddhā* and perform all activities with *śāstrīya-śraddhā*.

*yaḥ śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāma-kārataḥ* |  
*na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim* ||16.23||

The person who, disregarding the injunctions of *śāstra*, acts independently as directed by his mind, attains neither perfection, *i.e.*, does not reach *Bhagavān*, neither happiness nor the supreme destination.

*tasmāc chāstram pramāṇam te kāryākārya-vyavasthitau* |  
*jñātvā śāstra-vidhānoktam karma kartum ihārhasi* ||16.24||

Therefore, when ascertaining what is to be done and what is not to be done, *śāstra* alone is the authority (*pramāṇa*) for you. Knowing the action that is to be done as prescribed in *śāstra*, (you will) become qualified to perform that action (thus) established.

If *Guru* does not have direct experience of *Bhagavān*, he will be incapable of transferring knowledge.

If he does not conduct himself as per the scriptures, there will be no ideal for the disciple to follow.

The disciple surrenders to the *Guru* for the purpose of knowing, practising and conducting himself according to *Bhāgavata-dharma* and it is from conduct that this *dharma* is manifested.

*sarvāgamānām ācāraḥ prathamam parikalpyate |*  
*ācāraprabhavo dharmo dharmasya prabhur acyutaḥ ||* [Mahābhārata 13.135.137]

*ācāra* (conduct) is said to be the foremost of all topics treated of in the scriptures. *Dharma* is born from *ācāra*. The infallible Lord Acyuta is the Lord of *dharmā*.

*Ācāryavān puruṣo veda |* [Chāndogya Upaniṣad. 6.14.2]

Only one who has approached an *ācārya* will be capable of knowing the *tattva* (truth).

*ācinoti yaḥ sāstrārthān svācāraiḥ sthāpayaty api |*  
*svayam ācarate yasmāt tasmād ācārya ucyate ||* [Vāyu purāṇa]

One who has studied all the scriptures in the proper manner and also establishes *dharmā* through his *ācāra* (conduct) that is in accordance with the scriptures is called as *ācārya*.

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo*  
*na medhayā na bahunā śrutena |*  
*yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*  
*tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām ||* [Kāṭha Upaniṣad. 2.2.23]

*Bhagavān* is neither attainable through *pravacanas* (expositions) nor known through one's intelligence nor by hearing from many sources, rather, only to those who have an eager desire to know Him does He manifest His own form.

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ |*  
*amāyayānuvṛtīyā yais tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.22]

Staying with the *Guru* (after surrendering to him as mentioned in the previous verse-11.3.21) and serving him, he must learn the *bhāgavata-dharma* with no duplicity, taking to heart his *Guru*'s instructions, following them strictly and respectfully, serving the *Guru* as his *ātmā* (with *mamatva*), knowing Him as the *Bhagavān* he worships, and through these, Lord Hari, Who gives Himself to such devotees, gets pleased.

Amongst the above two consecutive verses quoted from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the first verse mentions about surrendering to the *Guru* and the second verse mentions about taking *dīkṣā* (initiation into *bhāgavata-dharma*) and *śikṣā* (training on *bhāgavata-dharma*). However, the characteristics of the *Guru* to whom one surrenders are only to do with his capability in giving *śikṣā*. It is thus clear that both *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā* are taken from the same *Guru* only for, the activity of *Guru* is to give *śikṣā* to the inquisitive disciple and the purpose of taking *dīkṣā* is only to take *śikṣā* on *bhāgavata-dharma* from a *Guru* who is qualified to give *śikṣā*. One who himself has not taken *śikṣā* is not a *Guru*.

Thus, following the above process, he gets freed of all sins. After complete surrender, because of *sama-bhāva*, one becomes a *sarva-bhūta-hite rataḥ* and thus attains *Brahma-nirvāṇa* even when living in this material world.]

*śraddhāvān labhate jñānam tat-parah saṁyatendriyaḥ |*  
*jñānam labdhvā parām śāntim acireṇādhigacchati ||4.39||*

Having *sāstrīya śraddhā* and being fixed in doing *niṣkāma-karma*, on attaining control of the senses one obtains *jñāna*. Having obtained *jñāna*, he very quickly attains supreme peace. That is to say, his fetters of worldly existence get destroyed. [Real *niṣkāma-karma* can happen only in *bhakti* and not otherwise. Without *bhakti*, *niṣkāma-karma* is bound to have hidden motives and thus is more dangerous than *sakāma-karma*. *Jñāna* means knowing *satya* as *satya* and *asatya* as *asatya* while *ajñāna* is the opposite, i.e. knowing *asatya* as *satya* and *satya* as *asatya*. This *jñāna* can be obtained only through *sāstrīya śraddhā*, which is the seed of *bhakti*, the harvest of the scriptures.

*satām prasaṅgānmama vīrya-saṁvido*  
*bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ |*  
*taj-joṣaṇād-āśvapavarga-vartmani*  
*śraddhā ratir-bhaktiranukramiṣyati || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.25]*

“Due to proper, distinguished association with *sādhus* , narrations that reveal My splendour and beauty and give bliss to the ears and the heart take place and because of hearing such narrations with attachment, *śraddhā*, *rati* and *bhakti* to Me occur very quickly and sequentially, this being the path which leads to the cessation of ignorance.”]

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## Śrī Guru-astakam

(From Śrī-Stavāmṛta-Laharī written by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhakkur)

Prayers to Śrī Guru which are to be read and contemplated upon by *bhaktas* daily.

*saṁsāra-dāvānala-liḍha-loka-  
trāṇāya kārunya-ghanāghanatvam |  
prāptasya kalyāṇa-guṇārnavasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

I worship the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva who is an ocean of auspicious qualities and who, due to his feelings of compassion, has come like a rain cloud in order to protect the people tormented by the forest-fire of mundane existence.

*mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta-  
vāditra-madyan-manaso rasena |  
romāñca-kampāśru-taraṅga-bhājo  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

I worship the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva who experiences the waves of horripilation, trembling and tears produced from the internal *rasa* of the intoxicating *premā* arising out of the glorification, dancing and singing of Mahāprabhu Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyadeva.

*śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-  
śṛṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanādaḥ |  
yuktasya bhaktāṁś ca niyuñjato 'pi  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

I worship the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva who is always engaged in various types of service, such as worshipping the deities of his most beloved Śrī Rādhā Govindadevī, decorating them in different ways every day, washing and cleaning Their temple etc, and who also engages devotees in such services to *Bhagavān*.

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda-  
svādv-anna-trptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān |  
kṛtvaiḥ trptim bhajataḥ sadaiva  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

I worship the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva who becomes satisfied by always satisfying the devotees of Śrī Hari with the four types of delicious *prasādam* offered to Śrī Bhagavān (those that are chewed, sucked, licked and swallowed).

*śrī-rādhikā-mādhavayor apāra-  
mādhurya-līlā-guṇa-rūpa-nāmnām |  
pratikṣaṇāsvādana-lolupasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

I worship the lotus feet of *Śrī Gurudeva* who, at every moment, is always ardently longing for relishing the boundless sweetness, pastimes, qualities, forms and names of *Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava*.

*sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair  
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ |  
kinto prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

All the scriptures declare that *Śrī Gurudeva* is *Śrī Hari* Himself, and saintly devotees consider so as well. I worship the lotus feet of that *Śrī Gurudeva* who, inspite of being *Śrī Hari* Himself has a relationship of inseperable *mamatva* to Lord *Śrī Hari*.

*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo  
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi |  
dhyāyan stuvāms tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ||*

As I exalt and meditate upon his glory during the three *sandhyās*, I pay my obeisances to the lotus feet of *Śrī Gurudeva* by whose grace one gets the grace of *Śrī Bhagavān* and by displeasing whom one loses all refuge whatsoever.

*śrīmad-guror aṣṭakam etad uccair  
brāhme muhūrte paṭhati prayatnāt |  
yas tena vṛndāvana-nātha sākṣāt  
sevaiva labhyā juṣaṇo'nta eva ||*

One who reads this *Śrī Guru-aṣṭaka* carefully and in a loud voice during the *brahma-muhūrta* shall, after his sojourn in his body, attain direct *sevā* to *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, Lord of *Vṛndāvana*.



## **GIVING UP SEVA-APARĀDHAS AND NĀMA-APARĀDHAS WITH CONSCIOUS EFFORTS**

To progress in *bhakti*, it is extremely necessary that *seva-aparādhās* and *nāma-aparādhās* be given up by special efforts. Those *aparādhās* (offenses) that happen while performing *sevā* of *Bhagavān* and objects related to Him are called *sevā-aparādhās*, whereas those that happen against the name of *Śrī Bhagavān* are called *nāma-aparādhās*.

[While these *aparādhās* have been dealt with in the scriptures, the general focus by spiritual adherents has been only on sin and atonement of sins. Since the process of *bhakti* means conscious efforts in acting favourably towards *Bhagavān* and everything related to *Bhagavān* with no other motive but to serve *Bhagavān*, and it is by pleasing *Śrī Guru* and *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* that one gets their grace in the form of *māmatva*, there is no scope for displeasing *Śrī Guru* and *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* by one's conduct and then atoning for the same, for such a mentality indicates duplicity on one's part. There is therefore no scope for *prāyaścitta* or atonement in the path of *bhakti*.

*yeṣāṁ sa eṣa bhagavān dayayed anantaḥ  
sarvātmanāśrita-pado yadi nirvyalīkam  
te dustarāṁ atitaranti ca deva-māyāṁ  
naiṣāṁ māmaḥam iti dhīḥ śva-śṛgāla-bhakṣye* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.7.42]

“*Bhagavān* on His own showers His unlimited mercy on one who surrenders himself and everything that belongs to him at His lotus feet by which they know the nature of His *Bahiraṅgā-śakti* (*deva-māyā*) that is very difficult to overcome and cross over it provided, their surrender is without duplicity. Only such people do not have feelings such as ‘this is Me’ and ‘this is mine’ towards themselves and their children whose bodies will be eaten by dogs and jackals”.

Surrender is not just an action but a commitment to act favourably towards *Bhagavān* and everything related to Him.

As much as favourable action is to be applied consciously, unfavourable action must also be avoided consciously. A detailed explanation on this can be seen in the commentary to the verse

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam |  
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam bhaktir uttamā* || [Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu 1.1.11]

“*Uttamā-bhakti* is the nature of favourably serving *Kṛṣṇa* and everything related to *Kṛṣṇa* both in one's thoughts, words and deeds and in one's feelings, at all times and in all states of consciousness. This nature is without any unfavourableness, is devoid of the tendency of getting any desire other than that of serving *Kṛṣṇa* and everything related to *Kṛṣṇa*. It is also

not covered by knowledge that has liberation as its goal or work that is performed with the expectation of material results or to avoid them.”

*Aparādha* means any conduct that displeases *Bhagavān*. Till one accepts the path of *bhakti*, his actions entail *pāpa* (sin) or *punya* (piety).

Once one has accepted *Bhagavān* as his shelter by surrendering to *Śrī Guru*, who is *Bhagavān* Himself incarnated for the sole purpose of bestowing *jñāna* and *sīkṣa* and *Bhagavān* accepts the devotee as His own when *Śrī Guru* grants *dīkṣā*, the devotee then acts favourably towards *Śrī Guru* and *Bhagavān* at all times. Any action of his that displeases *Śrī Guru* and *Bhagavān* is termed as *aparādha*. It is these *aparādhas* which obstruct one’s progress on the path of *bhakti*. Hence, it becomes necessary to avoid these *aparādhas* by conscious efforts in order to progress on the path of *bhakti*.]

These *aparādhas* have been described in detail in *Śrī Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu* (1.2.118-120) and they are now being described, along with the commentary, in this work called “***THE MEANS TO ATTAIN BHAGAVĀN AS PER ŚRĪMAD-BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ, ŚRĪ-GURU-AṢṬAKA & ADVERTENT AVOIDANCE OF SEVĀ-APARĀDHA AND NĀMA-APARĀDHA***” for the benefit of the devotees. By studying this book, they can progress quickly on the path of *bhakti* by giving up these *aparādhas*.

*sevā-nāmāparādhānām varjanam, yathā vārāhe—  
mamārcanāparādhā ye kīrtiyante vasudhe mayā |  
vaiṣṇavena sadā te tu varjanīyāḥ prayatnataḥ ||118||*

*pādme ca—  
sarvāparādha-kṛd api mucyate hari-saṁśrayaḥ |  
harer apy aparādhān yaḥ kuryād dvipadapāṁśulaḥ ||119||  
nāmāśrayaḥ kadācit syāt taraty eva sa nāmataḥ |  
nāmno hi sarva-suhṛdo hy aparādhāt pataty adhaḥ ||120||  
(*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.118-120)*

It is obligatory to give up *sevā-aparādhas* and *nāma-aparādhas*. As mentioned in *Varāha-Purāṇa*:

O Vasudhe! Whatever *aparādhas* I have mentioned in the matter of My *arcana*, it is necessary for *Vaiṣṇavas* to always give them all up with conscious effort.

It is also mentioned in *Padma-Purāṇa*:

Even a performer of all *aparādhas* gets freed from them by taking shelter of *Śrī Hari*. Even the most sinful person who lives like a biped and keeps committing *aparādhas* towards *Śrī Hari*, gets delivered through *Śrī Harināma* by sometimes taking shelter of It. However, by committing *aparādha* against *Śrī Harināma*, the well-wisher of all, one is sure to fall deep down.

*Bhakti-Sāra-Pradarśini-Ṭīkā* by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

*sevā-nāmāparādhānām varjanam ity ādi | yathā vārāhe pādme ca yathā-kramam yojyam |  
tatra sevāparādhā āgamānusāreṇa gaṇyante |*

*“yānair vā pādukair vāpi gamanam bhagavad-grhe |  
devotsavādy-asevā ca apraṇāmas tad-agrataḥ ||  
ucchiṣṭe vāpy aśauce vā bhagavad-vandanādikam |  
eka-hasta-praṇāmaś ca tat-purastāt pradakṣiṇam ||  
pāda-prasāraṇam cāgre tathā paryaṅka-bandhanam |  
śayanam bhakṣaṇam caiva mithyā-bhāṣaṇam eva ca ||  
[paryaṅkabandhanamiti vastrādinā saṅkucitacaraṇadvayasahita madhyadeśabandhanam]  
uccair bhāṣā mitho jalpo rodanāni ca vighrahaḥ |  
nigrahānugrahaḥ caiva nr̥ṣu ca krūra-bhāṣaṇam ||  
kambalāvaraṇam caiva para-nindā para-stutiḥ |  
aślila-bhāṣaṇam caiva adho-vāyu-vimokṣaṇam ||  
śaktau gaṇopacāraś ca anivedita-bhakṣaṇam |  
tat-tat-kālobbhavānām ca phalādīnām anarpanam ||  
viniyuktāvaśiṣṭhasya pradānam vyañjanādike |  
pr̥ṣṭhikṛtyāsanam caiva pareṣām abhivādanam ||  
gurau maunam nija-stotraṁ devatā-nindanastathā |  
aparādhās tathā viṣṇor dvātrimśat parikīrtitāḥ ||”*

*vārāhe ca ye’nye’parādhās te saṅkṣīpya likhyante—“rājāṇa-bhakṣaṇam, dhvāntāgāre hareḥ  
sparśaḥ, vidhim vinā hary-upasarpanam, vādyam vinā tad-dvārodghāṭanam, kukkura-dr̥ṣṭa-  
bhakṣya-saṅgrahaḥ, arcane mauna-bhaṅgaḥ, pūjā-kāle vid-utsargāya sarpanam, gandha-  
mālyādikam adattvā dhūpanam, anarha-puṣpeṇa pūjanam |” tathā—*

*“akṛtvā danta-kāṣṭham ca kṛtvā nidhuvanam tathā |  
spr̥ṣṭvā rajasvalām dīpaṁ tathā mṛtakam eva ca ||  
raktam nīlam adhutam ca pārayam malinam paṭam |  
paridhāya mṛtam dr̥ṣṭvā vimucyāpāna-mārutam ||  
krodham kṛtvā śmaśānam ca gatvā bhuktāpy ajīrṇa-yuk |  
bhuktvā kusumbham pinyākam tailābhyaṅgam vidhāya ca ||  
hareḥ sparśo hareḥ karma-karaṇam pātakāvaham ||”*

*tathā tatraivānyatra—bhagavac-chāstrānādareṇa tat-pratipattiḥ, anya-śāstra-pravartanam,  
tad-agratas tāmbūla-carvaṇam, eraṇḍa-patrastha-puṣpair arcanam, āsura-kāle pūjanam,  
pīṭhe bhūmau copaviśya pūjanam, snapana-kāle vāma-hastena tat-sparśaḥ, paryuṣitair  
yācitair vā puṣpair arcanam, pūjāyām niṣṭhivanam, tasyām sva-garva-pratipādanam, tiryak-  
pundra-dhṛtiḥ, aprakṣālita-pādatve’pi tan-mandire praveśaḥ, avaiṣṇava-pakva-nivedanam,  
avaiṣṇava-dr̥ṣṭau pūjanam, vighneśam apūjayitvā kāpālīnam dr̥ṣṭvā vā pūjanam,  
nakhāmbasā snapanam, gharmāmbu-liptatve pūjanam ity ādayaḥ | anyatra—“nirmālya-  
laṅghanam, bhagavac-chapathādayo’nye ca bahavaḥ” iti |*

*atha nāmāparādhās ca pādmoktāḥ—*

- 1) *satām nindā*
- 2) *śrī-viṣṇoḥ sakāśāt śiva nāmādeḥ svātantrya-mananam*
- 3) *gurv-avajñā*
- 4) *śruti-tad-anugata-śāstra-nindanam*
- 5) *hari-nāma-mahimny artha-vāda-mātram idam iti mananam*
- 6) *tatra prakārantareṇārtha-kalpanam*
- 7) *nāma-balena pāpe pravṛttiḥ*
- 8) *anya-śubha-kriyābhir nāma-sāmya-mananam*
- 9) *aśraddadhānādaḥ nāmopadeśaḥ*
- 10) *nāma-māhātmye śrute'py aprītiḥ iti*

*sarva evaite hari-bhakti-vilāse pramāṇa-vacanair draṣṭavyāḥ ||*

Translation:

*Sevā-aparādhās* and *nāma-aparādhās* are being described here. Those *aparādhās* that have been described in Varāha-Purāṇa and Padma-Purāṇa must be known to be talking about *sevā-aparādhā* and *nāma-aparādhā*, respectively.

Amongst them, we will first enumerate the *sevā-aparādhās* according to the Āgamas:

1. Entering the temple in a vehicle or with shoes on.
2. Not revering *utsava*, festivals and other occasions related with Kṛṣṇa.
3. Failure to offer obeisances to *Bhagavān* when in His vicinity.
4. Engaging in acts related to *Bhagavān* or paying obeisances when one is contaminated or in an unclean condition (not washing the hands and mouth after eating or not taking a shower after passing stool).
5. Offering obeisances with only one hand.
6. Circumambulating oneself in front of *Bhagavān*.
7. Sitting with legs stretched out in front of the deity.
8. Sitting in front of the deity in the *paryāṅka* position (Where both legs are raised and bent with soles touching the ground and the cloth worn is used to cover right from the hip to the toes or sitting with the hands holding the knees together.)
9. Sleeping in front of the deity.
10. Eating in front of the deity.
11. Speaking lies in front of the deity.

12. Speaking with a raised voice in front of the deity.
13. Gossiping with each other in front of the deity.
14. Weeping in front of the deity.
15. Fighting and quarelling in front of the deity.
16. Offering blessings to another in front of the deity.
17. Scolding or punishing someone in front of the deity.
18. Using harsh words against other persons in front of the deity.
19. Being covered with a blanket in front of the deity.
20. Criticising someone in front of the deity.
21. Praising someone in front of the deity.
22. Talking obscenely/harshly in front of the deity.
23. Breaking wind in front of the deity.
24. In spite of having the capacity, performing worship with ordinary ingredients, at minimum cost, such as offering only water and *Tulasī* etc.
25. Eating food which has not been offered to the deity [by doing so, one displays his independence].
26. Not offering the seasonal produce like flowers, fruits, vegetables, grains etc.
27. Distributing pickles, condiments etc first to others and then offering the rest to the deity.
28. Sitting with one's back to the deity.
29. Offering obeisances to someone else in front of the deity.
30. Remaining silent in front of *Śrī Gurudeva*.
31. Praising oneself in front of *Śrī Gurudeva*.
32. Criticising *devatās*. [Such as considering one *devatā* or form of *Bhagavān* as inferior to another *devatā* or form of *Bhagavān*.]

What follows is a brief description of all the remaining *sevā-aparādhas*, as they come in *Varāha-Purāṇa*:



33. Eating food from a king [When one accepts food from a king or a wealthy person one becomes mentally bound by him and is unable to stand up for truth if it is against the person who feeds him. For example, Bhīṣma was bound by Duryodhana because of being fed by him and could not stand up for *dharma* when required.]

34. Touching the deity in the dark.

35. Going near Śrī Hari without following any rules and regulations.

36. Opening the temple door without using an instrument or making a sound.

37. Accepting food that has been seen by a dog.

38. Breaking one's silence when performing *arcana*. [One should be completely silent.]

39. Leaving to pass urine/stool during the worship of the deities.

40. Offering *dhūpa* (incense) without offering flowers and *gandha* (sandal paste).

41. Performing *arcana* using flowers that are not prescribed. [Particular kinds of flowers are prescribed in the scriptures for use in the worship of particular deities. For example, in the worship of Kṛṣṇa, red flowers or blue flowers are not used. To be unmindful of them is an *aparādha*.]

Similarly –

42. Performing worship of deities without cleansing teeth and rinsing mouth thoroughly.

43. Worshipping after having sexual intercourse.

44. Worshipping after touching a menstruating woman.

45. Worshipping after touching a lamp.

46. Performing worship after touching a dead body.

47. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari wearing red or blue clothes, unwashed clothes [even if worn for a short time], clothes that belong to others, and clothes that are contaminated. [Even new clothes are to be washed before wearing].

48. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari after seeing a dead body.

49. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari after breaking wind.

50. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari when one is angry.

51. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari after visiting a crematorium.

52. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari when there is undigested food in the stomach.

53. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari after taking bhang (an intoxicating drink).

54. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari after eating asafoetida.

55. Touching Śrī Hari or doing activities of Śrī Hari after applying oil on one's body or body parts.

All these are activities which make one fall down.”

There are other *aparādhās* also mentioned elsewhere:

56. Disrespecting *bhagavat-sāstra* by propounding other scriptures.

57. Promoting and propagating other scriptures (that are not in relation to *bhakti-sāstra*).

58. Chewing betel leaves in front of *Bhagavān*.

59. Performing worship with flowers placed on a castor (*eraṇḍa*) leaf.

60. Performing worship during *āsuric* periods [such as twilight, night etc].

61. Performing worship while sitting on a *pīṭha* or wooden seat.

62. Performing worship while sitting on the floor.

63. Touching the deity with left hand when bathing *Bhagavān*.

64. Performing worship using withered flowers or flowers that have been begged or borrowed.

65. Spitting at the time of performing worship.

66. Showing one's pride at the time of performing worship.

67. Wearing *tilaka* that is horizontal or crooked.

68. Entering the temple without washing one's feet.

69. Offering food that is prepared by someone who is not a *vaiṣṇava*.

70. Performing worship when an *avaiṣṇava* is watching.

71. Performing worship without worshipping Vigneśa or Gaṇeśa [One should worship one's *Guru* first with paraphernalia that are different from those used in worshipping *Bhagavān*. Here worshipping Vigneśa or Gaṇeśa means worshipping one's *Guru*.]

72. Performing worship after seeing a *kāpālīka* [a kind of *śaiva* or *śākta* ascetic who carries a human skull.]

73. Bathing *Bhagavān* with water that has been touched by nails.

74. Performing worship whilst sweating.

And in some other places it is said –

75, 76 etc. – “There are many many other *sevā-aparādhas* which have been mentioned, like disrespecting *nirmālya* [flowers/*Tulasī* that have been offered to *Bhagavān*] by crossing over them and taking oaths in the name of *Bhagavān*.”

The *sevā-aparādhas* described above and all other *sevā-aparādhas* must be given up by conscious effort.

### ***Nāma-aparādhas***

After describing the *sevā-aparādhas*, now we will describe the *nāma-aparādhas* as per the statements given in Padma-Purāṇa:

- 1) Criticising saintly people.
- 2) Considering the names etc of Lord Śiva to be independent of Śrī Viṣṇu.
- 3) Disrespecting *Śrī Gurudeva* (not following his instructions, considering him to be an ordinary human being and find faults with him).
- 4) Criticising *śruti* and scriptures that follow *śruti*.
- 5) Supposing that the glories of *Śrī Harināma* are *arthavāda* (simply praise).
- 6) Fabricating different interpretations of the meaning of *Śrī Harināma* on the basis of its glories.
- 7) Tendency to commit sins on the strength of the Name.
- 8) Considering the Name to be comparable to other auspicious activities.
- 9) Giving instruction on the Name to one who does not have *śraddhā*.
- 10) Not having *prīti* in spite of hearing the glories of the Name.

All these are *nāma-aparādhas*. The *pramāṇa* statements for all these can be seen in Śrī Hari-Bhakti-Vilāsa.

***śrī hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.521-524)***

***pādme śrī-nāradam prati sanat-kumāreṇaivoktāḥ—***

*satām nindā nāmaḥ paramam aparādhām vitanute  
yataḥ khyātim yātaḥ katham u sahate tad vigarihām |  
śivasya śrī viṣṇor ya iha guṇa nāmādi sakalam  
dhiyā bhinnam paśyet sa khalu hari nāmāhita karaḥ ||*

*guror avajñā śruti śāstra nindanam  
tathārtha vādo hari nāmni kalpanam |  
nāmno balād yasya pāpa buddhir  
na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ ||*

*dharmā vrata tyāga hutādi sarva  
śubha kriyā sāmyam api pramādaḥ |  
āsraddadhāne vimukhe'py āśṛṇvati  
yaś copadeśaḥ śiva nāmāparādhāḥ ||*

*śrute'pi nāma mātmye yaḥ prīti rahito'dhamah |  
aham mamādi paramo nāmni so'py aparādha kṛt ||*

Śrī Hari-Bhakti-Vilāsa (11.521-524) –

In Padma-Purāṇa, Śrī Sanatkumāra has mentioned the below mentioned ten *nāma-aparādhās* to Śrī Nārada:

1) Criticising saintly people. Such criticism expands to a terrible *aparādha* towards *Śrī Nāma* because how can *Śrī Nāma* tolerate the criticism of those same saintly people who have firm faith in the *Nāma* and by whom the glories of the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa have been preached to the whole world? Therefore, *sādhu-nindā* is not going to be tolerated by *Śrī Hariṇāma*.

2) That person in this world who sees the *Nāma* (name), *rūpa* (form), *guṇa* (qualities) and *līlā* (pastimes) of Śrī Viṣṇu and Śrī Śiva with a sense of difference is certainly a *nāma-aparādhī*.

3) That person who disregards *Guru*, in other words, does not give him respect (this includes performing activities as one deems fit rather than following the instructions of *Śrī Guru*), cannot be purified even by a multitude of procedures such as *yama*, *niyama*, *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇa* etc or even by experiencing abundant tormenting by Yamarāja. [Most people in this world commit this *aparādha* because of their carelessness to correct themselves.

*ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit |  
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.27]

Know that the *Guru* is Me. Do not disrespect him even a little. Do not be envious of him (attributing defects to his personality, instructions and qualities) by seeing him with *martya-buddhi* (mortal intelligence, considering him like a mortal being), for the *Guru* is the *Iṣṭa*. (*Iṣṭa* means the object that one seeks to attain. Every devotee seeks his dear Lord or devatā as the final goal. His *Guru* is that *devatā* or Lord)

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ |*  
*amāyayānuvṛtṭyā yais tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.22]

Staying with the *Guru* (after surrendering to him) and serving him, he must learn the *bhāgavata-dharma* with no duplicity, taking to heart his *Guru*'s instructions, following them strictly and respectfully, serving the *Guru* as his *ātmā* (with *mamatva*), knowing Him as the *Bhagavān* he worships, and through these Lord Hari, Who gives Himself to such devotees, gets pleased. (See verse 2.41 in Srimad Bhagavad-Gītā.)

4) That person who criticises *śruti* and other scriptures that follow *śruti* in explaining bhakti cannot be purified even by a multitude of procedures such as *yama*, *niyama*, *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā* etc or even by experiencing abundant tormenting by Yamarāja.

5) That person who supposes that the glories of *Śrī Harināma* are *arthavāda* (simply praise) or considers them to be *atistuti* (excessive praise) or that the glories themselves are imagined, and fabricates different meanings, cannot be purified even by a multitude of procedures such as *yama*, *niyama*, *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā* etc or even by experiencing abundant tormenting by Yamarāj.

6) “When sins are destroyed by uttering the *Nāma*, then what is there to fear from them? Hence I will always keep sinning, and for purification I will also keep uttering the *Nāma*.” That person who utters the *Nāma* thinking in this manner cannot be purified even by a multitude of procedures such as *yama*, *niyama*, *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā* etc or even by experiencing abundant tormenting by Yamarāja.

7) It is a *nāma-aparādha* to consider uttering the *aprākṛta* (spiritual) *Nāma* to be similar to *prākṛta* (material) auspicious activities like *dharma* (charity), *vrata* (vows), *tyāga* (renunciation), *homa* (oblation with fire), *yajña* (sacrifice) etc or to replace such activities with chanting of *Harināma* considering *Harināma* as the most auspicious and purifying and thus will more than fulfill the purpose of such auspicious activities.

8) It is a *nāma-aparādha* to be inattentive when uttering or hearing the *Nāma*, that is to say, not being attentive due to carelessness.

9) It is an *aparādha* to *Śrī Śiva-Nāma* to give instructions to those who are non-believers, faithless or averse to hearing the *Nāma*. Here, the word “*Śiva*” has been used only with the *abheda-jñāna* (knowledge of non-difference) between *Śrī Bhagavān* and *Śrī Śiva*.

10) That person who, inspite of listening to the most wonderful glories of the *Nāma*, does not show *prīti* towards It and is still having the conception of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ or is intent upon various kinds of enjoyments but does not utter the *Nāma* is also certainly a *nāma-aparādhī*. This also includes giving instructions on the holy name to one who is still having the conception of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ or is intent upon various kinds of enjoyments.

All these *nāma-aparādhās* must be given up with conscious effort.



Humans are in general offenders towards the holy name of *Bhagavān*, therefore, though people desire and seek Prema to *Bhagavān*, because of their uttering the *Nāma* even while committing *aparādhas*, *bhakti*, proper conduct and *Prīti* towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not arise in the society but rather, one develops a special attachment to one's body, senses and to those related to one's body.

*yasya deve parā bhaktiḥ yathā deve tathā gurau |*  
*tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanah |* | [Śvetasvatāra.Upaniṣad. 6.23]

Only to one who has *parā-bhakti* to *Bhagavān* and the same kind of *parā-bhakti* to *Śrī Guru*, are the *sādhya*, *sādhana* and *puruṣārtha* in connection with *Bhagavān* as told by the scriptures revealed internally, in his heart. For one who does not have such *bhakti* in the lotus feet *Śrī Guru*, the *tattvas* (principles) told by the scriptures are not manifest.

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## “ŚRĪ HARIDĀS-NIWĀS”

### AN IDEAL PLACE TO LEARN, PRACTICE AND FOLLOW BHĀGAVATA DHARMA

The divine *āśram*, “Śrī Haridās Niwās” is sanctified by the saintly presence of its founder, a reverent person who is uniquely educated in the scriptures and is venerated by the entire community of *sādhus* in Vrindavan, **His Holiness Śrī Śrī 108 Haridās Śāstriji Maharaj**.

More than ninety-five years of age, Śrī Maharāj ji, as he is known – has been radiating his spiritual potency at this *āśram* since the days when Vṛndāvan was full of forests. He is one of the rare contemporary saints of this country who is highly learned in scriptural knowledge. He has achieved laurels in thirteen different branches of Sanskrit studies like *vyākaraṇa*, *kāvya*, *nyāya*, *tarka*, *sāṅkhya*, *mīmāṃsā*, *vedānta*, *vaiṣṇava-darśana*, etc. He had brought to light priceless works by *Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-ācāryas* on *bhakti*, saving them from getting lost for ever and personally ran a press and accomplished printing about 80 such works. In order to preserve the *tātparya* (essential meaning) of these works, he wrote a lucid translation for nearly all of them. He comes in the direct disciplic succession of learned *ācāryas* from Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, the close associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, a lineage having the ideal combination of scriptural erudition and uncontaminated devotion.

Śrī Maharāj ji has been training with dedication anyone who approaches him for the purpose of knowing about, learning, practicing and following *Bhāgavata-dharma*, setting an ideal by his own conduct.

*dhāraṇāt dharmam-ityāhuḥ dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ |*  
*yaḥ syāt dhāraṇa-saṁyuktaḥ sa dharma iti niścayaḥ ||* [Mahābhārata 12.109.11]

“*Dharma* is derived from the idea of nurturing all. It is by *dharma* that the subjects are maintained. That which is equipped with the nature of protecting and nurturing is indeed *dharma*.”

*sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje |*  
*ahaituky apratihatā yayātmā suprasīdati ||* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.6]

“That, indeed, is the most sublime *dharma* of men, which results in *bhakti* of *Adhokshaja*, the Supreme Lord. The nature of such *bhakti* will be that it will be devoid of any motivation other than *bhakti* itself and there won’t be anything else that can give higher happiness than that *bhakti*.”

This most sublime *dharma* is called as *Bhāgavata-dharma* and it is explained by the following verse in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

*etāvān eva loke'smin puṁsām dharmah paraḥ smṛtaḥ |*  
*bhakti-yogo bhagavati tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ* ॥ [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.22]

“*Bhakti-yoga* done towards *Bhagavān* through processes such as *nāma-saṅkīrtana* (glorification of His name) is alone said to be the supreme dharma for the humans.”

In the verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the term “*ādibhiḥ*” means that such *bhakti-yoga* includes various processes of which the *nāma-grahaṇa* (uttering the *nāma*) is the prime.

*Bhakti* is defined concisely by the following verse:

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam |*  
*ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam bhaktir uttamā* || [Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu 1.1.11]

“*Uttamā-bhakti* is the nature of favourably serving Kṛṣṇa and everything related to Kṛṣṇa both in one's thoughts, words and deeds and in one's feelings, at all times and in all states of consciousness. This nature is without any unfavourableness, is devoid of the tendency of getting any desire other than that of serving Kṛṣṇa and everything related to Kṛṣṇa. It is also not covered by knowledge that has liberation as its goal or work that is performed with the expectation of material results or to avoid them.”

In this verse two characteristics of *bhakti* have been defined – essential and secondary.

The essential characteristic of *bhakti* is “*ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*” – favourably serving Kṛṣṇa and everything related to Kṛṣṇa both in one's thoughts, words and deeds and in one's feelings, at all times and in all states of consciousness without any unfavourableness. The verbal root “*śīl*” encompasses the entire gamut of activities of a person be it mental, verbal or physical. In addition, it also covers the “*bhāva*” or the feeling in the mind such as liking and disliking. Thus, *bhakti* is neither just a feeling nor just the activities, but both favourable activities and favourable feeling combined.

The secondary characteristic of *bhakti* is “*jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*” – to be not covered by *jñāna* or knowledge. The term “*jñāna*” here means knowledge which is of the form of contemplation on *Brahman* as being non-different from the individual *ātmā*. Here, “*jñāna*” does not refer to knowledge which is of the form of contemplation on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the object of worship. The reason is that, knowledge on the object and process of worship is compulsorily needed in *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is a scriptural subject. Hence, it is extremely necessary to have proper knowledge in the *bhakti-sāstras*, scriptures that focus on *bhakti*.

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pāñcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā |*  
*aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate* || [Brahma-Yāmala]

Without considering injunctions from *Śruti*, *Smṛti*, *Purāṇas*, *Pañcarātra* and other scriptures, one-pointed devotion to Hari only leads to a calamity to one's devotion.

Thus we come to the first requirement in learning *Bhāgavata-dharma* namely, *śāstra-adhyayana*, studying scriptures that deal with *Bhāgavata-dharma*. It means approaching the scriptures favourably for the purpose of understanding the *viśaya* (subject matter of the scriptures), *abhidheya* (process to attain the goal) and *prayojana* (the goal).

Śrī Haridās Niwās provides a facility for students inquisitive in *Bhāgavata-dharma* to study under Śrī Maharāj ji who, even at an advanced age continues to teach and train anyone who is serious to learn *bhāgavata-dharma*. People from various parts of the world approach him to ask questions on the *bhakti-śāstras* and get instructions on *bhāgavata-dharma*. There is a sprawling library with more than 10,000 books on more than 100 scriptural topics available for reference.

The main fruit of studying Vedas and scriptures that follow Vedas is to perform *upāsana* (devotional service) of *Bhagavān*. If one who studies the scriptures does not serve *Bhagavān* then, inspite of his studies, all his scriptural erudition only terminates in vain exertion.

*Bhagavān*, out of His mercy, is resplendently manifest as Śrī-Śrī-Rādhā-Govinda and Śrī-Śrī-Gadādhara-Gaura in the temple inside the complex where devotees offer service to Him.

As explained before, *bhakti* is full of activities. Since scriptures are the sole authority on the basis of which any activity is to be performed, the same extends to performing activities in *bhakti* also. These activities are called as *aṅgas* or sub-divisions of *bhakti*. Śrī-Hari-Bhakti-Vilās has a collection of a large number of sub-divisions of *bhakti* amongst which Śrī-Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu lists 64.

Amongst them, according to Śrī-Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu (1.2.238), even the slightest connection with any of the 5 below frees a person from material existence, if he has an offenseless tendency:

- i) *Śrī-mūrter-anghri-sevane prītiḥ* – *Mamatva* in serving the divine deities of *Bhagavān*
- ii) *Śrī-bhāgavatārthāsvāda* – Relishing the meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
- iii) *Sajātīyāśaya-snigdha-śrī-bhagavad-bhakta-saṅga* – Associating with like-minded, tender hearted devotees of *Bhagavān*
- iv) *Śrī-nāma samkīrtanam* – Glorification of Holy name of Śrī Hari
- v) *Śrī-mathurā-maṇḍale sthitiḥ* – Residing in the province of Mathura.

It must be remembered that *bhakti* is not obtained by any activity. Being the *svarūpā-śakti* of *Bhagavān*, it is independent and can be attained only through the grace of *Bhagavān* or His dear devotees. These activities are performed by a devotee with *śraddhā*, after surrendering themselves, for the purpose of advancing in *bhakti* in order to get *mamatva* towards *Bhagavān* and everything related to Him.

Śrī Haridās Niwās is a unique place where all the above five *aṅgas* are available for a person who is willing to advance in *bhakti*. This advancement in *bhakti* shows in the form of *seva* with *mamatva*.



### The meaning of seva

*Seva* means to serve somebody with *anukūlatva*, a favourable tendency, devoid of unfavourableness in any form. The terms “*bhakti*”, “*bhajan*”, “*paricarya*” and so on are synonyms for the word “*seva*”, which means service performed with *bhagavad-bhāva* having only the satisfaction of the object of service as the goal.

The real outcome of *bhāgavata-dharma* is *seva*. For the purpose of practically following *bhāgavata-dharma*, Śrī Maharājaji has given a very unique process namely, doing *Seva* to *Go*, the Indian breed of cows, bulls and calves. This however is not new. The original enunciator of *Bhāgavata-dharma*, *Svayam Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, also being the original *Jagad-Guru* had already demonstrated this by His conduct.

He ever resides in *Gokula* and *Goloka*, belongs to the *gopas* and *gopis*, was born amongst them during His appearance on this earth and was raised by them as a *Gopāla* (the maintainer of *Go*), was named as *Govinda* (One who gives pleasure to *Go*), took a pledge to protect the clan of *Go* and performed wonderful pastimes to fulfill His pledge, pastimes which are extolled by various scriptures and beautifully described through devotional songs in nearly all the languages of India.



A glimpse of His conduct in this regard can be seen in the following excerpt from the work Śrī-Govinda-Lilāmṛtam. Once when He was to go for taking the cows and calves for grazing,



His parents told Him to go with an umbrella and footwear while attending to the cows and calves in the forest paths:

*bālo'si mṛdulas tatra vimukta-cchatra-pādukāḥ |  
dinam bhramasi kāntāre jīvetām pitarau katham ||5.26||*

You are a young child and hence are very tender. If you roam in the difficult forest paths without an umbrella or footwear all through the day under the hot sun, how can we bear that?

*kriyamāṇāgrahau svasya cchatropānad-vidhāraṇe |  
vātsalya-vyākulau vīkṣya pitarau prāha keśavaḥ ||5.27||*

Seeing his parents who were insisting on His taking umbrella and foot-wear, Lord Keśava told them, who were overcome by filial love, as follows.

*go-pālanam sva-dharmo nas tās tu niśchatra-pādukāḥ |  
yathā gāvas tathā gopās tarhi dharmāḥ sunirmalaḥ ||5.28||*

The scriptures say that our *jāti-dharma* is to protect and maintain the cows and calves isn't it? All of them don't have umbrella or footwear. As the *Go* are, so must be the *Gopa* (one who attends to them) i.e., one who attends and serves cannot be in a more convenient position than the one whom he serves. Only then does our *dharma* remain uncontaminated.



*dharmād āyur-yaśo-vṛddhir dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ |  
sa katham tyajyate mātā bhīṣu dharmo'sti rakṣitā ||5.29||*

Dear mother! From *dharma* only does one's fame and longevity increase and *dharma* protects one who protects it. It is *dharma* only that will protect Me, hence why should we give-up our *dharma*?

Thus Śrī Govinda demonstrated real *dharma* to this world by His conduct. The tendency which He demonstrated towards the cows and calves is called as *anukūlatva*. Being the original *JagadGuru*, Whose conduct and teachings are always in harmony with each other, He gave *śikṣa* to Arjuna on *anukūlatva* later on in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra as follows:

*ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna |  
sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ ||6.32||*

One who sees the happiness and misery in everyone similar to the way he sees them in himself – that *yogī*, O Arjuna, is the best. Such is My opinion.

We see that He first practiced *Bhāgavata-dharma* Himself and then preached it.

There is also a particular reason why *Go* are so dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They are of the same nature as of Kṛṣṇa, never wishing harm to anybody (*niraparādhī*) and always intent on others' welfare (*paropakārī*). This is the same quality that is also found in the dear devotees of *Bhagavān*, the *Bhāgavatottamas*.



The scriptures glorify various entities and personalities as the abode of all the *devas*. The term used in such cases is “*sarva-devamaya*”. Examples are, *sarva-devamayam harim* (Hari, the abode of all *devas*), *sarva-devamayo nṛpaḥ* (King, the abode of all *devas*), *sarva-devamayo-gāvaḥ* (Go, the abode of all *devas*), *sarva-devamayo-athithi* (surprise guest, the abode of all *devas*), *sarva-deva-mayo-guru* (Guru, the abode of all *devas*), and so on. Amongst such references, only in the case of *Hari*, *Guru* and *Go* is the term applied with the sense of totality. This is because, all three have the same quality i.e., are *sarva-bhūta-hite rataḥ*, all three have *mamatva* to each other and worship to all the three goes to the same Person, Lord Hari.

Another description from Śrī-Govinda-Līlāmṛtam shows how much Śrī Govinda is pleased with everything that is connected with *Go*.

*gomayotpalikā-kūṭair giri-śṛṅga-nibhair yutam |*  
*vāsītā vāsa-mattānām ṣaṇḍānām saṅgaroddhuraṁ ||5.3||*

Looking at the beauty of *Vrajabhūmi*, he became extremely blissful. In one place, the heaps of dried cow-dung discs were looking like mountain peaks, in one place a playful tussle was going on between bulls which were nourished for the purpose of preserving fertility of the cows.

*kṛṣṇa-līlām pragāyadbhir vihasadbhiḥ parasparam |*  
*gomayāvacaya-vyagrāḥ gopa-dāsī-śatair vṛtam ||5.4||*

In one place, hundreds of *gopī*-maid-servants were getting engrossed while singing about pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa even as they were collecting the dung and in another place, *gopas* were running around, catching the calves of the cows as they were preparing to take them all for grazing into the forests; in another place, elderly *gopis* were making discs of dung for drying.

*go-yāna-vatsāvaraṇa-vyagra-gopa-śatānvitam |*  
*gomayopalikā -krdbhir jarad-gopī-gaṇair yutam ||5.5||*

In one place, there were many *goshalas* and near them there was the habitation meant for calves that was adorned with trees and plants, there were many dried cow-dung discs everywhere and the whole place was scattered with dried cow-dung powder because of which the whole place had become very soft.

*gavām sthānī-śreṇī-sphūritam abhito'lpāvṛti-cayo-*  
*llasad-vatsāvāsa-sphurita-tala-vṛkṣāvalicitam |*  
*kariṣa-kṣodasyoccaya-mṛdula-bhūmī-talam asau*  
*vrajābhyarṇam pūrṇam vraja-dhana-janair vīksya mumude ||5.6||*  
*tarnakārodhana-vyagra-gopa-yādo-gaṇānvitāḥ |*  
*ucchalad-gopayaḥ pūrāḥ dugdha-bhāṇḍāni kacchapāḥ ||5.7||*  
*go-śakṛc-cayanāsakta-gopī-vaktra-saroruhāḥ |*  
*sitāruṇa-calad-vatsa-haṁsa-koka-kulākulāḥ ||5.8||*



*nirgacchad-dhavalā paṅkti-nadīr gopuccha-śaibalāḥ |*  
*gavālaya-sarah-śreṇīḥ paśyan sa mumude hariḥ ||5.9||*

Looking at all that loveliness, Śrī Govinda became very happy. The *goshālās* there were beautiful like a lotus lake. The white cows that were coming out of the *goshālās* in a row were like a stream from the lake and the milk that was coming out of the udders of the cows were like the water in the stream, *gopas* who were running here and there to catch the calves were like large aquatics, the faces of the *gopīs* who were collecting the dung were like lotuses that had bloomed in the lake; the white and red coloured calves were like the swans and *cakravāk* birds on the banks of the lake and the tails of all the cows were like *śaibala* plants.

Śrī-Śrī-Rādhā-Govinda, the presiding deities of Śrī Haridās Niwās enjoy a very similar environment everyday, being surrounded by *goshālās*.

The beginning of *bhakti* is *ānukūlyātmaka-vṛtti*, the tendency to please others without seeking anything in return. This comes by the grace of *Bhagavān* or His dear devotees. By serving *Go* truthfully, one can not only get the *ānukūlyātmaka-vṛtti*, the tendency to please others without seeking something in return, but one also gets all the other results that can be got by every other pious activity. By getting this *ānukūlyātmaka-vṛtti*, one becomes favourably poised towards every living being on this earth and this is the way to become a *sarva-bhūta-hite rataḥ*.

As seen earlier, the worship or *seva* done to *Go* is actually worship or *seva* done for Lord Govinda.

*satye pratiṣṭhitāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ satyam atra pratiṣṭhitam |*  
*satyāt satyam ca govindas tasmāt satyo 'pi nāmataḥ || [Mahābhārata 5.68.12]*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa resides in truth and truth is where He is. Everything that is true is dependent on Him, the Supreme truth; therefore, He is named “*Satya*”.

Śrī Govinda is truth. ‘Truth’ here means truthfulness in existence, thoughts, words and deed. His name itself is “*Satya*”. This is the reason why Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam begins and ends with meditation on Śrī Govinda – “*satyam param dhīmahi*”. Any *seva* to Śrī Govinda must therefore be totally free of falsity. The pleasure of Śrī Govinda lies in service rendered to *Go* truthfully, without duplicity.

The *seva* to *Grantha*, Govinda and *Go* are carried out in an uncontaminated and pristine manner at Śrī Haridās Niwās. *Grantha* is *Śabda-brahma*, Govinda is *Para-Brahma* and *Go-Seva* is the ideal for *ācaraṇa* (conduct).

A perfect indication of uncontaminated *seva* to *Go* is the large *Goshala* that exists exclusively for bulls. The *seva* to bulls is of the same standard as the *seva* to cows and calves. On hearing the term *Go-seva*, people generally think of only *seva* to cows and calves little realizing that the term *Go* refers as much to the bulls of Indian breed as it refers to the cow.

The reason for this misconception is that, people have come to look at even the term “*seva*” through the lens of usefulness while “*seva*” by definition means favourable service WITHOUT ANY EXPECTATION IN RETURN AT ALL.

The human nature has three aspects- *svārtha* (selfishness), *kalaha-priyatva* (love for quarrelling) and *lobha* (greed). Of the three, the former is the root while the latter two are its shoots.

In reality, the term “*Go*” represents the entire universe and the creature *Go* also represents the entire universe. *Go-Seva* actually means *seva* to the entire universe as explained by *Bhagavān* in verse 6.31 of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

*sarva-bhūta-sthitaṁ yo mām bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ |*  
*sarvathā vartamāno’pi sa yogī mayi vartate ||6.31||*

That *yogī* who is in *ekatva* (is united with Me in a loving relationship), and serves Me Who am situated in all the beings, resides entirely only in Me, though engaged in all kinds of dealings.

*sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopāla-nandanaḥ |*  
*pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīr bhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtaṁ mahat ||*

All the *Upaniṣads* are *Go*, *Gopālanandana* (dear one of the *gopālas* i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa) is the milker, Pārtha (Arjuna) is the calf and those with fine intelligence are enjoyers of the great nectar called *Gītā*.

We see here that the *Upaniṣads* are likened to *Go* and *Go*’s milk is the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Due to the selfish nature of humans, the meaning of the term “*Go*” has shrunk to cows even excluding bulls, who have lost their usefulness in the present age.

Bulls, however, are the very form of *dharma* and are a form of *Bhagavān* Himself.

*vedaḥ praṇava evāgre dharmo’haṁ vṛṣa-rūpa-dhṛk [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.11]*

In the beginning the *vedas* were in the form of *praṇava* and I, the embodiment of *dharma* was worshipped in the form of a Bull.

It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that in *Kali-yuga*, *dharma* would lose three of His legs viz., austerity, compassion and purity and will stand on just one leg viz., truthfulness.

Śrī Haridās Niwās is one of the very rare places on earth today where *dharma* personified has flourished and stands majestically on all His four legs.

Service to others, however noble they may be, if done with some form of expectation, come under *laukika-śraddhā* mentioned in chapter 17 and 18 of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Actions in *bhakti* or *Bhāgavata-dharma* are done with *śāstrīya-śraddhā* and differ from *laukika-śraddhā* as



sunlight differs from darkness. Such actions in *bhakti* do not even have the characteristics of actions done in *sattva-guṇa* or the mode of goodness.

*yādṛṣī yādṛṣī śraddhā siddhir bhavati tādṛṣī* ॥ [Brahma Saṁhita 60]

Whatever is the nature of one's *śraddhā*, the perfection one will achieve will also be according to that *śraddhā*.

*Laukika-śraddhā* can utmost get one social recognition since; it originates from the society and is nourished by society, social opinions and social norms while *sāstrīya-śraddhā* leads one to *Bhagavān*.

Therefore, it is necessary that one who really wants to practice *Bhāgavata-dharma* must give up *laukika-śraddhā* and perform all activities with *sāstrīya-śraddhā*.

While service to *Go*, when performed with any kind of *śraddhā* will certainly elevate a person, if it is done with *sāstrīya-śraddhā*, it grants *mamatva* to *Bhagavān*.

How one must perform *seva* is explained by the following verse from Śrī-Govinda-Līlāmṛtam:

*tr̥ptāṁ anya-janasya tr̥ptim ayitā duḥkhe mahā-duḥkitā  
labdhaiḥ svīya-sukhāli-duḥka-nicayair no harṣa-bādhodayāḥ |  
sveṣṭārādhana-tat-parā iha yathā śrī-vaiṣṇava-śreṇayah  
kāś tā brūhi vicārya candra-vadane tā mad-vayasyā imāḥ ||13.113||*

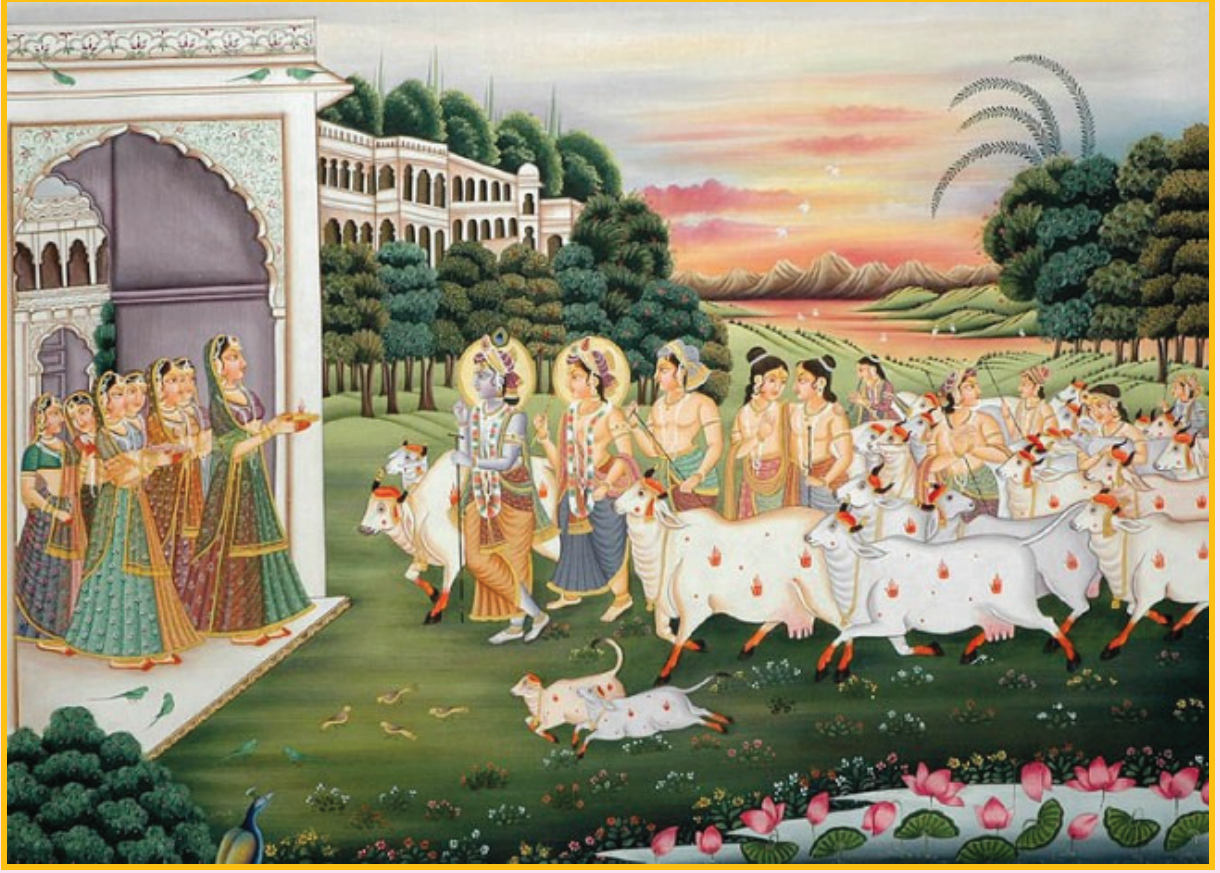
Deriving satisfaction only from the satisfaction of the one being served, feeling extreme pain because of any misery that may befall the object of service, unmindful of the happiness or suffering that one may experience during the course of service, whatever may be the cause and being totally fixed in the worship of one's *iṣṭa*.

It is only from the kind of *seva* described above can one actually please *Bhagavān* and this is the standard of conduct in *Bhāgavata-dharma*. The *Go-seva* in Śrī Haridās Niwās is always performed to this standard.

One of the 64 *aṅgas* of *bhakti* is "*dhātry-aśvatthādi-gauravam*". While commenting on this *aṅga*, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmi quotes the following verse from *gautamīya-tantra*:

*gavāṁ kaṇḍūyanam kuryād go-grāsam go-pradakṣiṇam |  
goṣu nityam prasannāsu gopālo'pi prasīdati ||*

One must remove the mites and insects on the body of *Go* by scratching their body, one must feed the *Go* to their satisfaction and circumambulate them. If *Go* are always happy, *Gopāla* too is pleased easily.



The key word in this verse is “*nityam*”- continually and perpetually. This same meaning is implied by the prefix “*anu*” before the verbal root “*śīl*” in the essential characteristic of bhakti namely, “*ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*”.

Śrī-Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu gives the following description of *rāgātmikās*, those who have complete *mamatva* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*virājanṭīm abhivyaktāṁ vraja-vāsī janādiṣu |*  
*rāgātmikām anusṛtā yā sā rāgānugocyate ||* [Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu.1.2.270]

That *bhakti*, whose form is resplendent in those, such as the people and other residents of *vraja* is called as *rāgātmikā*. That *bhakti* which totally follows them is called as *rāgānugā*.

In his commentary to the above verse, Śrī Mukunda Gosvāmi writes “*atha rāgānugā—virājanṭīm iti ādi-śabdena go-mṛga-śukādayo gṛhītāḥ*” – the term “*ādi*” is understood to refer to the *Go*, deer, parrots and other creatures of *Vraja*. Thus, not only do the people for *Vraja* but even the creatures in *Vraja* such as *Go* are *rāgātmikās*.





It is therefore seen that *Go* have a very special place in *bhakti* and *Go-seva* when done sincerely, devoid of duplicity, with *bhagavad-bhāva* is a proper *sādhana* in *bhakti* because of its being an *aṅga* of *bhakti* in accordance with *bhāgavata-dharma*. It is also the most natural process because the object of service is extremely dear to the *Iṣṭa* and is a form of *Iṣṭa*.

The last verse that mentions the benefit of reciting Śrī-Guru-aṣṭakam is as follows:

*śrīmad-guror aṣṭakam etad uccair  
brāhme muhūrte paṭhati prayatnāt |  
yas tena vṛndāvana-nātha sākṣāt  
sevaiva labhyā juṣaṇo'nta eva ||*

One who reads this Śrī-Guru-aṣṭakam carefully and in a loud voice during the *brahma-muhūrta* shall, after his sojourn in his body, attain direct *sevā* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord of Vṛndāvana.

*cintāmaṇi prakara sadmasu kalpa vrkṣa  
lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhir abhipālayantam |  
lakṣmī sahasra śata sambhrama sevyamānam*

*govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi* || [Brahma.Saṁhita. 29]

“I worship that Original Person Govinda Who is engaged in affectionately maintaining and protecting *Go* (*Surabhi*) while being respectfully served by thousand of Lakṣmīs, the beautiful women of Vraja, in a dwelling that is full of *cintāmaṇi* stones (thought-gems) and is surrounded by millions of wish-fulfilling trees.”

Since Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Vṛndāvana is Himself ever engaged in *Go-seva*, *Go-seva* is thus, also the *sādhya*.

As *bhāgavata-dharma* is followed in Śrī Haridās Niwās with the highest level of standard and commitment, the place provides an ideal opportunity for anyone who is interested in studying, practicing and following *Bhāgavata-dharma*.

Interested persons may kindly contact the address given in the front page and back cover.

*nehābhikrama-nāśo ’sti pratyavāyo na vidyate* |  
*svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt* || 2.40 ||

The *bhakti-yoga* characterized by *śravaṇa* (hearing about *Bhagavān*), *kīrtana* etc, even if just begun, can neither be annihilated nor diminished. When beginning this dharma, even if only a little of it has been observed properly, that still frees one from the greatest fear; in other words, frees one from the bondage of this mundane existence.

*na vipra-govinda-gav-īśvarāṇām* |  
*bhavanty abhadrāṇi nareśvarāṇām* || [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.24]

No inauspiciousness ever befalls those best of humans who consider *Brāhmaṇas*, Śrī Govinda and *Go* as their Lord (*īśvara*) and are recipients of Their grace.

❧ · Śrī Hari · ❧



॥ gopālanandanam kṛṣṇam vande jagad-gurum ॥

*namo brahmaṇya-devāya go-brāhmaṇa hitāya ca  
jagaddhitāya kṛṣṇāya govindāya namo namaḥ*

Obeisance to Brahmaṇya-deva (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) Who works for the welfare of the Go and the Brāhmaṇas! Obeisance to Śrī Govinda, Who works for the welfare of the world!



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